

S. Hutchins

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THE
LAY PREACHER'S
HANDBOOK:

First Steps in Homiletics.

BY THE REV.

CHARLES O. ELDRIDGE, B.A.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that
needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing
the word of truth."

SEVENTH THOUSAND.

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PREFACE.

My friend Mr. Eldridge has asked me to write a few words of preface to his excellent Handbook for Lay Preachers. This book has been written at my suggestion, and in the following circumstances. During the past few years my work as one of the editors of *The Preacher's Magazine* has brought me into communication with large numbers of Christian workers in various branches of the Church and in many lands. Nearly two years ago *The Preacher's Magazine Union for Biblical and Homiletic Study* was started with a view to giving friendly advice and criticism to lay preachers and others who might desire such help. From the first Mr. Eldridge undertook a large share in the supervision of the Homiletic section. I received many letters from men and women who expressed the profoundest gratitude for the kindly advice and judicious help received from him. It occurred to me that it would be well for him to prepare—what I have long felt to be greatly needed—an

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elementary book on preaching, written not for ministers but for lay preachers.

We were in want of a text-book for the students connected with our Union; but Mr. Eldridge, whilst providing this, has kept a much wider constituency in view. He has avoided all purely denominational expressions, and his book will be of value to preachers in any Evangelical Church.

It will be obvious to every reader that the author has religiously kept to his special province. He has provided "first steps in homiletics," and has not attempted to write for the more experienced preachers who have been so ably and so amply counselled by Van Oosterzee, Dale, Beecher, Blaikie, and many others.

It may perhaps be felt by some readers that the system of sermon-preparation recommended in this Handbook requires more time and care than they are able to give. Such readers must not be discouraged by advices which can only be fully carried out by those who have a certain amount of leisure. For those who can adopt it the plan suggested by Mr. Eldridge is a good one, and even those who prefer other methods may gather many useful hints from it. If you cannot give all the care you would like to your sermons, at least you should give all the care you can.

Dr. Horton has told us lately that preaching

has fallen into "general contempt on this side of the Atlantic." We need not trouble to dispute this saying, though we must seek to disprove it whenever we enter a pulpit. But surely the preacher never had a better opportunity, a wider influence, or a vaster responsibility than he has to-day. It is true that there is a growing impatience with dull, lifeless, inefficient preaching. We must not complain of this; our only regret is that it is not tenfold more intense. That a man can be dull and lifeless who has to deliver the glorious message of the gospel to men who stand between the solemn past and the still more solemn future, must surely astonish and distress the angels of God. Yet this is one of the common marvels of everyday life. "Dull as a sermon" is a phrase that has grown into a proverb. Some part of the distaste for preaching results, doubtless, from the unwillingness of the sinful heart to hear of God and Christ, of heaven and hell. But there is, alas! only too good ground for the saying. Hundreds of sermons are preached every Sunday in which it would be difficult for any intelligent man—whether converted or unconverted—to take any interest. A good preacher, however, will always secure an audience. Even though he may not gather a large congregation, he will speak to men and women who will hear his word, believe it, and be helped by it.

The wise old Preacher who wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes tells us that he sought to find out *acceptable* words. Every honest preacher of the gospel must do the same. It is no small thing to be able to say of a man that he is "an acceptable preacher." But if we are to win this praise we also must *seek* for "words of delight," or, at least, for words that will gain attention. A good sermon is not so much one that is well preached as one that is well heard. Unless people will listen to us, our sermons may be very good sermons, judged by some homiletic standards; but we are very poor preachers, judged by all principles of religion and common sense.

There is a great danger that preachers may come to be satisfied with the delivery of sermons which reach a certain literary or homiletic standard, and, finding themselves able thus to pass muster with their congregations, may cease to feel and to show that intense earnestness, that yearning pity for souls, which should characterise every preacher. If we are to give good account of our work in the Great Day we must ever feel and often say, *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

A reminiscence of my student days may serve to illustrate this point. Two young men were

coming out of a theological professor's class-room, "Yes," said one, "I agree entirely with Dr. ——— 'every sermon ought to be *a work of art*.'" "So do I," answered his friend, "but with a slight alteration. It seems to me that every sermon ought to be *a work of heart*."

No wise man will despise the help he can obtain from books and teachers, none can afford to disregard the example of his predecessors, but no skill in the art of sermon-making will ever compensate for the lack of *heart* in preparation and in delivery. If we must choose, we would rather have *heart-istic* than *art-istic* preachers, and we are inclined to think that most congregations will agree with us.

It must, however, be remembered that energy, volubility, even earnestness and piety, will not by themselves make good preachers. The man who stands on a kerb-stone, as well as he who occupies a cathedral pulpit, should talk good sense. "That which was written," says the Preacher, "was upright, even words of truth." The humblest village congregation has a right to expect correct exposition and sound doctrine, and the most earnest evangelist need not grudge the time spent in "seeking to find out acceptable words."

ARTHUR E. GREGORY.

Jan. 31, 1894.

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LAY PREACHER'S HANDBOOK.



INTRODUCTION.

THE office of the lay preacher needs no justification; the preaching of the gospel has never been confined to the clergy, and of late the number of all classes of lay helpers has increased enormously. The Church of England has its lay-readers and its Church Army; the various branches of the Methodist Church have their local preachers and exhorters; the Presbyterian Churches have their probationers, evangelists, and lay missionaries; other Nonconformist Churches employ lay preachers to minister to rural congregations, while city missionaries shepherd their little flocks in our large towns, and Joyful News agents evangelize the villages. To these must be added the "captains" and "lieutenants" of the Salvation Army, male and female, who are reckoned by thousands, and are scattered well-nigh over the

world. The employment of women in this work has also largely increased. Deaconesses, "Sisters of the People," and female evangelists of proved ability, are now recognised helpers in the Church, and are making full proof of their ministry.

Much of this work is not only rendered freely, but is undertaken at the cost of considerable self-denial. The day of rest is converted into a season of holy toil for Christ and for souls, and the Sabbath day's journeys undertaken stretch painfully beyond the limit assigned by ancient Rabbis.

In this work many of humble position and slender education have gained for themselves a good degree, and some have risen high in the ranks of evangelists. The pulpit has afforded opportunity for the village shopkeeper, the artisan, and the farm labourer to develop talents which otherwise might have remained unknown and unimproved. These men, like John Bunyan, have learned in the school of experience, and their views of truth consequently suit the facts and needs of the times. Homely their preaching may be, but they preach to homely people; and if there be a marked provincialism in their speech, it is nothing more than betrayed the Galilean origin of the apostles. Much of their work is not of a high literary character, but it is as good as the Church has a right to expect, for she has never

made any adequate provision for their training. They have generally been left very much to their own resources to collect such books as they could afford, and to make their sermons as best they might. No artisan would be expected to perform creditable work with such slight instruction as they have commonly received.

But it must be confessed, that their work has sometimes not only come short of the ideal, but of the attainable standard. Probably this is due to the neglect with which the Church has treated her workers so that they have lost heart, and contented themselves with a measure of efficiency below their ability; while some who were anxious to excel have failed through want of suitable guidance. Thus the work has occasionally suffered in general repute, and this again has had a reflex influence on both preachers and congregations, till the people have ceased to expect much, and the preacher has contented himself with a homely talk about good things.

And this depreciation of the work has been aggravated by the strange unwillingness on the part of many Christians of ability and education to engage in it. Some of the best qualified are the most unwilling; and by various excuses they endeavour to persuade themselves that they are not called to a work involving so much of self-

denial. Consequently, the work suffers in social prestige, through being left to men who lack the educational advantages and the social position which would commend them to present-day congregations; men who would not have ventured to undertake it, but for the crying need created by the refusal of their better qualified brethren to respond to the call of duty.¹

We have endeavoured to meet both classes. We have furnished such plain and detailed directions on self-culture, and on the whole round of a lay preacher's work, as will enable the ill-equipped "to find his feet"; to make the best use of his opportunities, and very largely to repair the failures of the past. We have also showed that this work is of so lofty a character as to demand, and amply to repay, the employment of the noblest gifts and most devoted labours. Here is work for the humblest and ablest. "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven" has that wherewith he may "lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees"; and he that has gathered most from all the fields of knowledge will yet be brought to his knees in earnest prayer

¹ I am, of course, not unmindful of the fact that many men of education and position are to be found in the ranks of lay preachers, but their number is lamentably small in proportion to the need.

for higher and richer teaching, when he attempts to "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." And while they feed the flock, the Great Shepherd will spread for them a table in the wilderness, will anoint their head with oil, and fill their cup to overflowing.

No labourer receives a richer reward than the faithful and conscientious lay preacher, who toils purely for love of Christ and of souls. His Bible study is ever feeding his spiritual life; his sympathy with nature and with man enlarges his mind and heart, and thus broadens and deepens the interest and joy of life. These, together with the happy friendships formed with humble saints, their generous, homely hospitality, the Master's presence and power realised in the sanctuary, the fruit gathered from time to time, the inward consciousness of divine acceptance, and the prospect of sharing in the joy of the great harvest-home above, combine to make this unpaid branch of service the most richly paid of all.

It must never be forgotten that *the work done out of the pulpit is as important as that which is done in it.* It is possible to be diligent in the work of preparation without sacrificing fervency of spirit. To preach well one must pray well, study well live well, and be ever growing in

grace and knowledge. Preaching is not merely the outcome of the head or of the heart, but of the entire life. The preacher presents *himself* in his message, and he must be a "vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

The day of the illiterate—and let us hope of the careless—preacher is past. The age demands in the pulpit an education at least well abreast of the pew. The man who believes himself called to preach must now believe he is called *to study, to show himself* "*approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" Preparation is more necessary than ever. The reputation of the pulpit ~~is~~ is the custody of those who occupy it. The age will not endure shams; it demands realities. It will only tolerate the preacher who can justify his position by his work. We deal with great realities; we must feel them, and make our hearers feel them, or the honour of the Christian pulpit will become a tradition of the past.

The Preacher's Work and Call.

"Lo, this hath touched thy lips ; and thy iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? Then said I, Here am I ; send me."—ISA. vi. 7, 8.

"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."—ACTS viii. 4.

"Faithful men who shall be able to teach others also."—2 TIM. ii. 2.

"As a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."—1 COR. iii. 10.

"The Lord giveth the word : the women that publish the tidings are a great host."—PS. lxxviii. 11 (R. V.).

"I have planted, Apollos watered ; but God gave the increase. We are labourers together with God."—1 COR. iii. 6, 9.

"So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase."—1 COR. iii. 7.

"Christian saw the picture of a very grave person hang up against the wall ; and this was the fashion of it ; it had eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the Law of Truth was written upon his lips, the world was behind his back ; it stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over its head."—BUNYAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE PREACHER'S WORK AND CALL.

THE greatest facts of life are precisely those which are so taken for granted as to be seldom thought of. That man's daily bread is provided by the joint action of heaven and earth; that the sun, the atmosphere, and the clods of the valley yield each their quota to furnish our table,—everybody knows this, yet few think of it. Many farmers, who are specially called to co-operate with God, and whose success in business depends entirely upon His giving the increase, have no thought of Him; but depend instinctively upon the ordinary course of nature, as they “plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land.” It is easy and interesting to trace the partnership existing in fact between the farmer and the Almighty, and to see how the farmer would gain in pleasure and piety by recognising it. But in relation to material things there is too great a

tendency to look down; to magnify man's work and forget our dependence upon God. It seems hard to realise that He is the God of matter; and the regularity of His work in nature leads the mind to rest in the effect without seeking the cause.

But the preaching of the Word is beset with temptation from the opposite direction. As the work is spiritual in its nature, and so much depends upon divine influence, some preachers sow the seed of the kingdom without considering whether they have chosen the most suitable seed, or striving to acquire the best method of sowing it. They appear to think that provided the truth is preached it matters little what truth or how; that any sermon will do for any congregation, and God will do the rest. But the farmer knows that the harvest depends largely upon how he does his work. Careless farming will not yield the best results: soils have to be considered and cultivated according to their nature; seed must be chosen suitable for soil and season, and care must not cease when the seed has been sown. It is so in the spiritual world: planting and watering must be done well and judiciously, or the crop may fail even though good seed is sown.

Some regard the Spirit as fitful and uncertain in His operations. Those who fall into this error

are wont to justify it by a misquotation ; gravely reminding us that "in vain doth a Paul plant and an Apollos water, unless God give the increase." This is a truism ; but it remains for them to tell us, when and where Paul and Apollos, or any of their successors, ever did their work properly without the increase being given ! The farmer counts with confidence upon divine co-operation, though he does not always recognise it as such ; and surely it behoves the spiritual sower to reckon just as confidently that the power which works within him will also work with him.

From these considerations it will appear how important it is that a preacher should understand his relation to God and to God's work ; that he should know what he has to do and what he has to depend upon ; should know also which of all the various classes of labour in the field he is best fitted for, and should make a special study of doing that work well.

THE PREACHER A FELLOW-WORKER WITH GOD.

The preacher is not a passive instrument, but a living and intelligent agent working in sympathetic co-operation with God. There is work that should be done, but which will remain undone, unless man accomplishes it ; and there is work now being poorly done which would yield

much better results if those who have it in hand were better qualified and more in earnest.

The idea that we are "instruments," "humble instruments in the hands of God," savours more of a false humility than of Scripture. Paul never so speaks of himself and his fellow-labourers. He does not call himself a "planting-tool," nor Apollos a "waterpot"; but a *fellow-labourer* with God, a steward, a minister, an ambassador. He laboured, striving according to His working, which wrought in him mightily; he filled up that which was behind in the sufferings of Christ in his own flesh; he realised his responsibility as one to whom a dispensation of the gospel had been committed,—all which sentiments indicate the intelligent agent feeling a deep interest in the issues involved.

Again we are told that in the synagogue at Iconium, Paul and Barnabas "*so spake*, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed"; and that in Achaia, Apollos "helped them much which had believed through grace; for he mightily convinced (powerfully confuted) the Jews, and that publickly, *shewing by the Scriptures* that Jesus was (the) Christ." When dissension arose on the question of circumcision, "the apostles and elders came together, for *to consider* of this matter"; and in the same strain

Paul exhorts Timothy to *study* to show himself "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

The vast importance attaching to man's share in the work may be illustrated from nature, from revelation, from the history of the Church, and from the needs of the present day.

Abroad, amid the wilds of nature, are the products of creative power in endless variety; there also tremendous forces are always at work, which, though called natural, are really divine. Yet the vast prairie, the primeval forest and the sandy desert remain unchanged while God works there alone.

But when man arrives the wilderness and the solitary place are made glad, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. Man does what God never has done, and never will do. It is certain that God alone would never have made the world what it is, and equally certain that man alone never could. The present state of things is the result of man's more or less intelligent co-operation with God. It is plain, too, that as we advance in knowledge and skill we are able to produce better results; so that the present conditions of life contrast favourably with those of five hundred years ago. God is the same as ever: the laws of nature have not

altered; but we have learned to dress and keep our garden more wisely, and therefore it yields richer and more abundant fruits. Yet the increase is all of God; for man's wisdom and strength are His gift, and the improvement is the fruit of His power and blessing flowing along the channels of natural law.

The manner in which God has been pleased to impart a knowledge of Himself in His Word further illustrates our argument. The sacred penmen were evidently not mere amanuenses writing from dictation, or there had been no room for the play of individual peculiarities. But in its variety of composition the sacred volume is as human as in its contents it is divine. So we have—

“Isaiah's wild measure, and John's simple page.”

We have the laws of Moses, the prayers of David, the charming pastoral Psalms, the pithy Proverbs of Solomon, the dark pessimism of the Preacher, the prophecies of Isaiah, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the critical Gospel of St. Luke, the loving reminiscences of St. John, and the letters of St. Paul. In all the afflatus is divine, but the form of expression human. The acrostic Psalm, the search for “acceptable words,” and the knowledge resulting from “having traced the

course of all things accurately from the first,"¹ all indicate the intelligent agent under the influence of the Spirit of Revelation.

The importance of human co-operation with God is further illustrated in the history of the Church. During the first three centuries, when God's fellow-workers were in real earnest, the gospel spread rapidly, though bitterly opposed and persecuted; but when the diligence of the human helpers failed, "the dark ages" brooded over Christendom. Within the last hundred years the quickened flame of missionary enterprise has wrought such wonders that we may almost expect another century to see the world evangelized; but if the Church again sinks into slumber, the darkness will return. We are all familiar on a small scale with the working of this principle. Where earnest, believing, well-directed effort is put forth, the work of the Lord prospers; but when zeal declines the Church decays.

The needs of the present day loudly emphasise the importance of man's share in the work. God ever was what He now is. The love manifested on Calvary is as strong as ever. Yet the greater part of the world is a spiritual desert which will never become a fruitful field till the seed of the kingdom has been sown there. As the solitary

¹ St. Luke i. 3 (R. V.).

place waits for the emigrant, so does the heathen land await the arrival of him that publisheth good tidings.

The Spirit seeks expression for the gospel through human lips; if these be refused, He ordinarily uses no others. Christ longs that His love may dwell in human hearts, and be manifested through human lives. The vine puts forth its beauty and fruit *through its branches*, not on its stem. The world's future is thus put into the hands of men; and an awful responsibility therefore rests upon the Church. The question is not whether God will give the increase, but whether Paul will plant, and whether Apollos will water.

It will perhaps be objected that this is putting too high an estimate on man's work. We grant that it seems more modest to speak of man as "a humble instrument in the hands of God"; yet there is no true humility in placing oneself in a false position, nor is there any virtue in a false humility. To regard ourselves as mere tools in the hand of Deity is to misunderstand ourselves, and in effect to throw the whole responsibility of the present state of the world upon God.

Hence we arrive at the following conclusions: That the world's moral wildernesses will only be reclaimed by man's intelligent co-operation

with God; that the manifestation of the love and saving grace of God is now given to the world in the lives of believers; that all who have received salvation are therefore called, not to be Quietists, nor to wait for a secret and irresistible impulse to move them to some great work, but to bestir themselves as intelligent and responsible agents—

1. To live daily in the enjoyment of fellowship with God, and to be filled with the Spirit, so as to sympathise with the divine purpose, and to possess power for successful work.

2. To acquire the fullest possible knowledge of Christian doctrine, privilege, and duty.

3. To improve each talent, and to bring it into use, as circumstances, opportunity, and the requirements of the Lord's work may demand.

The honour thus put upon us is inconceivably great, but our responsibilities are so enormous that we may well tremble. Our consolation is that "our sufficiency is of God"; and as His grace has made us what we are, it will avail for all the duties to which He may call us. We also have the assurance, confirmed by the course of nature, that our labour will not be in vain. God's covenant with the earth and His co-operation with the husbandman are not more certain than His covenant of grace and His co-operation with

His servants; but the increase as well as our strength and skill are all of Him. "So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

PRE-REQUISITES FOR THE WORK.

When a young man believed himself called of God to preach the gospel, the early Methodists were wont to inquire whether he possessed the needful *grace, gifts, and fruit*. The criteria laid down by modern writers are generally included in these. We cannot suppose God sends unconverted men, or men to whom He has denied the necessary natural capacity, to preach His Word; and when He has qualified and sent a messenger, we believe His message will not be uttered in vain. Assuming, then, that one is possessed of grace, we inquire what natural gifts are required in the pulpit?

As the preacher undertakes to expound the gospel, he must clearly apprehend it himself, *i.e.* he needs a sound understanding and good common sense. As he seeks to influence others he will require true-heartedness, to command their esteem, and a loving, sympathetic spirit to win them to the truth. As by his living presence and voice he seeks to carry the truth home, he

must possess sufficient bodily strength and nerve, together with clearness and readiness of utterance. In fact, he requires *a sound head, a true heart, a clear voice, and distinct utterance*. These may be regarded as essentials.

Where these exist, combined with grace, the Church will generally not be slow to recognise them; and any one thus naturally gifted will be invited to use his talents in the Sabbath school, in mission services, or elsewhere. And when the natural nervousness has been overcome, and a fair trial made, the result will indicate whether the preaching of the Word is the special work to which he is called.

Among the fruits which indicate a call to preach, the following may be named:—

1. That God calls the people to listen to the message.

2. That He gives the preacher satisfaction and comfort in the work; that He fills his mouth with arguments, endues him with unction, and with a yearning love for souls.

3. That those who listen are instructed, impressed, and edified; that some ere long are brought to repentance; and that the judgment of experienced believers is in favour of the preacher.

No Church should be content with a ministry

destitute of the gifts above enumerated; and no preacher should be content to continue long in the work without some at least of these fruits following.

There are excellent men of large information who, for want of a ready utterance, will never make preachers; and there are others who, though they possess fervent piety, lack the clearness of understanding essential for efficient pulpit work. Happily the departments of church work are so many and various, that labourers of all grades and gifts may find their appropriate sphere. The brother possessed of only one talent has no excuse for laying it by unused.

Thus far we have spoken of the minimum of talent and grace. But the pulpit affords scope for the exercise of the noblest faculties. There is no higher sphere of work, nor one which makes larger demands on the entire being. It calls forth the highest powers of the mind, for it deals with the great problems of life and destiny. It excites the deepest emotions, for it unfolds the love which God hath for us. It gathers its illustrations from all fields of knowledge, and enforces its demands alike on peasant and peer. In many kinds of handicraft, one may attain a standard of excellence sufficiently high to meet all requirements; but the possibilities for improvement in this

work are so vast and varied that one can never become a perfect preacher.

We have supposed the preacher to be converted; but this is only the foundation of the grace required. Christ has not ordained two standards, one for the pew and another for the pulpit; yet, unless the preacher possesses a more vigorous life than the average member of his congregation, he is not likely to lift them; and, whatever may be his present experience, unless he continues to grow in grace, his ministry will soon lose its power. It is impossible to preach effectively if inspired only by the memory of old experiences. In the young preacher, flushed with the joy of salvation, we expect a burning zeal for the salvation of souls; but along with this, in the aged, we look for that deep and rich experimental knowledge which qualifies them to lead believers on to perfection.

The fruits, too, are richly varied. No preacher should be satisfied to feed the flock without increasing it; yet it is a mistake to estimate the value of a ministry only by its converts. It is no small privilege to minister to the "heirs of salvation," to be a Greatheart to encourage the pilgrims, to strengthen and warn them against temptation, to comfort the feeble-minded, and guide the doubting. Some who are not brought to Christ by our

preaching may yet be restrained from sin and attached to the means of grace to be the seals of another's ministry. If we can throw fresh interest into the study of the Word, and invest old truths with new power; if we can lead the doubting to an established faith and clear experience; if we can make the higher privileges of the Christian life the common heritage of the flock, our ministry will not be in vain.

THE CALL TO PREACH.

We have already indicated the qualifications essential to the preacher's work. But though without these one can scarcely dare to enter the pulpit, it does not follow that all who possess them are alike called to the public ministry of the Word.

Every believer is bound to make known the glad tidings of the gospel. Some can do this most successfully in private, dropping a good word here and there: visiting the sick, helping the poor, or scattering tracts accompanied with kind words. But there are others whose education and gifts qualify them to take a more public position and do the work on a larger scale. They apprehend the truth clearly, and can present it in an attractive and impressive way.

Yet it does not necessarily follow that they

should occupy the pulpit. The inquiry of the humbled Saul, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" expresses the true spirit of service. The Master's call often comes through circumstances, opportunities, and the necessities of the work. There are Sabbath-school teachers and conductors of Bible classes who are as truly and effectively "preaching the word" as though they occupied the pulpit; and their work requires as careful preparation.

A true servant will hold his gifts at his Master's command, he will take up the work lying nearest to hand and do it well and faithfully. In one church the want is teachers, in another mission workers, in another preachers; let those who have the gifts respond to the calls, and in the order of Providence those who ought to enter the pulpit will presently be found there. It is in this way that many find their vocation; their call comes through *the needs of the Church*.

There are some to whom "the word of the Lord comes," so that it is as a fire in their bones. They feel assured that a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto them, and that woe is unto them if they preach not the gospel. Such a call, when confirmed by "signs following," is a source of strength and satisfaction to the preacher, and gives force to his message.

Often, however, there is no such burning conviction, but rather a painful shrinking from the work, such as only a loud call from without can overcome. In such a case a trial will generally enable a faithful man to decide his course. Some of the most painfully diffident have become the most valuable preachers. But if the result of a fair trial is adverse, there should be no hesitation in directing one's energies into a more suitable channel.

It is to be feared that many, to their soul's great loss, have refused to listen to the call both of the Spirit and of the Church. Possessed of all needful equipment, like the children of Ephraim, armed and carrying bows, who turned back in the day of battle, they have shrunk from the labour, and persuaded themselves that others were better fitted for it. But though they appear to enjoy their Sabbaths listening to sermons when they ought to be preaching them, they have an uneasy conviction that they have really left their work to be done by brethren less gifted than themselves, but of a nobler and more self-sacrificing spirit. It is a standing reproach to the Christian Church that many of her young men of ability and education refuse the call to this noblest service. Surely if they only knew how God and man would bless them in it, they would refuse no longer.

The Preacher's Self-Culture.

"Because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs."—ECCLES. xii. 9.

"Blessed be God . . . who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—2 COR. i. 3, 4.

"How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them."—PS. cxxxix. 17.

"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy riches."—PS. civ. 24.

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow."—ST. MATT. vi. 28.

"And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it."—ST. LUKE xix. 41.

"Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works."—HEB. x. 24.

CHAPTER II.

THE PREACHER'S SELF-CULTURE.

THOSE who are satisfied with their attainments plainly show that they have not yet taken the first step towards true knowledge, inasmuch as they have not learnt their own ignorance. As the awakened soul can never rest but in God, yet finds even that rest a ceaseless aspiration to such communion as can only be fully enjoyed in eternity; so the mind athirst for knowledge can never be satisfied on earth. The more it gains, the more it longs to gain; only the higher vantage ground of the heavenly life can satisfy the hunger of the human mind.

The same sky is before the astronomer and the countryman, but to the one it is an open book whose unfinished story is full of absorbing interest, while to the other it is merely a weather indicator. The naturalist and the tourist traverse the same country; the one returns richly laden with speci-

mens and knowledge of the fauna and flora, the strata of the rocks and the peculiarities of the climate; the other only says he enjoyed a splendid holiday among the mountains and the lakes. The lover of nature and the utilitarian gaze on the same splendid waterfall, standing together in the vast rock-temple hewn out by the swirling floods of past ages. To the one the foaming cataract is an exquisite delight, to the other it is only a great waste of water-power. The one is entranced at the beauty of those massive rock walls, clad with ivy and festooned with creepers, adorned with ferns and surmounted with lofty firs; the other thinks what splendid building stone is lying idle, and what useful timber the trees would furnish if cut down and sawn up. The explorer and the drink-loving sailor visit the same foreign land; the one gains knowledge which improves the commerce of the globe, the other can only tell what facilities he found for getting drink.

These and many similar instances show plainly that life is not the same to all, and that knowledge does not depend so much on opportunity as upon ourselves. The world is large and has many interests; we are in danger of looking at it merely on the side of our own individuality, or trade, or training. There is the world of politics, of commerce, of science, of art, of religion, of sport, of

fashion, of travel, of agriculture. How many more worlds there are in this one we will not venture to guess. We are apt to suppose that the world is the same to others as to ourselves, whereas there is perhaps no one who sees it as we do. The real interest and joy of life depend greatly upon the degree to which we can multiply our views of the world and of life, so as to realise our position in the great universe, and to become interested in some measure in all the works of God and all the affairs of man. And it is this awakening of the mind which lies at the foundation of all true education; it is the opening of the eyes to see, and of the ears to hear, and of the mind to understand.

It will be seen in the sections which follow that true self-culture, such as the pulpit demands, consists more in acquiring habits which render the mind receptive to all knowledge, than in merely storing the memory with facts and theories. Of course a mastery of one's mother-tongue is essential, but beyond this almost everything depends on the formation of correct habits of speaking, reading, thinking, and observing. These in a most marvellous way will open the mind to all knowledge, invest all things with a new and unfailing interest, and bring us into sympathy with God, with man, and with the whole universe.

We have particularly emphasised the habits which have a direct use in the pulpit or in the preparation of sermons. A preacher deals with thoughts, therefore he must learn to think clearly and correctly; he deals with religious experience, therefore he must know how to observe, and learn from his own experience and that of others; he ministers the Word, therefore he must be generally familiar with it as a whole, and particularly familiar with those portions which immediately concern his message; the God whom he proclaims is manifested both in His Word and in His works, therefore he should be familiar with both; he ministers to man, therefore he must form such habits of observation and sympathy as will bring him into touch with mankind at large, and in particular with those to whom he ministers. Meantime a well-trained memory gathers up in store knowledge of every kind, both for use and for delight.

GENERAL SELF-IMPROVEMENT.

As we are writing more especially for those who have not had the advantage of special training, and whose education in some cases has been scanty, it is incumbent on us to give some hints on self-improvement. In these days when every child is expected to pass "the standards," the

pulpit must at least be abreast of the pew in general knowledge.

Any one, therefore, who believes himself called to preach must, if his early education has been neglected, apply himself diligently to self-culture. It will not be difficult to gain assistance from some educated friend, or join an evening class, or obtain advice from the schoolmaster as to a suitable book for home study, so that the rudiments of English grammar and composition, together with the analysis of sentences, may be mastered. No preacher can afford to despise this minimum of knowledge. A preacher who cannot speak grammatically is like a tradesman who has not learned to use his tools.

When the rudiments are mastered, much improvement will result from carefully observing how the rules of grammar are illustrated in the books you read; how the sentences are formed, and how the different parts of compound sentences are related to each other. You may think this is altogether wide of preaching, but it is just as necessary as the practising of the "scales and exercises" is to the aspiring musician.

Very much may now be accomplished by setting a careful watch over your ordinary conversation, taking care always to speak grammatically. At first this will seriously check your natural fluency,

but after a few months it will return with interest. Another source of improvement is offered in the conversation of persons of education, but this guidance is not always reliable. By these means one may in time acquire the habit of correct extemporaneous speaking, that is, he may learn how to use his tools; but to obtain material on which to use them is quite another matter.

If within reach of a Mutual Improvement Society or a Theological Class, a young preacher should gladly make the most of the opportunity, both for the acquisition of knowledge and for exercise in public speaking.

It is a great mistake to estimate the value of a book, or of a branch of study, by the amount of "sermon matter" gained from it. The power to keep, so as to be able to reproduce on occasion, is as important as the ability to gain; hence the necessity for training the memory till it becomes like a well-arranged store in which every article is in place ready at call. But it requires a good salesman to turn stock into money, and so a well-trained mind is necessary to turn knowledge to good account. This is the special province of true education; it trains for service whatever capabilities the mind possesses, and then the mind will gather and retain knowledge as easily as a sponge absorbs water. A thorough study of

the first book of Euclid might not furnish material for a single sermon, but to many a preacher it would be much more profitable than a theological treatise, because it would teach him how to marshal his thoughts in logical array.

If any one thinks it not worth his while to take so much pains to improve himself, he had better at once give up all idea of being a preacher. The exhorter who tells his experience, and urges his hearers to seek the like, may for once or twice fill a vacancy acceptably; but steady work requires a well-stored mind trained to orderly thinking and correct reproduction, and this can only be gained by hard study.

GRASPING A THOUGHT.

Lord Bacon says that words are the capital of fools, but the counters of wise men. The mere pouring forth of a stream of words is not preaching; and of many who are said to have a fine command of words, it might rather be said that words command them. The preacher's capital consists of solid truths rather than of formal expressions; of valuable timber rather than of graceful foliage.

Nothing but clear, hard, definite thinking will serve the preacher's purpose. He has to deal with tremendous realities, and unless his own

mind is very deeply impressed by them, he cannot hope to impress the minds of others. Not only must he grip the truth, but the truth must return the friendly grip before he can take the place of the "mutual friend" and announce that truth to others.

As a buyer can estimate the comparative value of samples, so a preacher should be able to tell at a glance the value of thoughts, and to judge which of them are worthy to take the lead in a discourse, and which are suited only to fill in by way of illustration.

One of the most profitable exercises a young preacher can engage in, is to take some good work on Systematic Theology, and make a careful digest of its contents; so as clearly to express its substance in the fewest possible words, and those words so chosen as to suggest more than they express. Or sermons by great and wise preachers may be outlined in the same way. The speciality of this exercise lies in the necessity it creates for taking hold of the thought, for picking it up out of its verbiage and looking at it, for grasping it so as to make it your own, and then condensing it; yet so that all in the larger form may potentially remain in the briefer.

Another useful exercise is to read slowly, pausing at each word which suggests or completes

a thought, till that thought is fairly grasped. There are some of the Epistles to which this method of reading may be applied with great profit. Take, *e.g.*, Phil. iii. 7, etc.

“ But [*turning-point in thought*] what things were gain to me [*What things? In what sense were they gain?*], those I counted loss for Christ. [*Here is deliberate estimation of their value, and intentional relinquishing of the less to secure the greater. In what sense did Paul count these loss? Why did he count it worth while to lose them that he might win Christ?*] Yea, doubtless [*the strong swimmer is about to make a deeper plunge now*], and I count all things [*not merely my Jewish advantages*] but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus [*here Christ is the central magnet, and the possibility of a personal knowledge of Him the form this attraction takes. The peculiar excellency of that knowledge arises from the glories of His Person*] my Lord [*the personal relationship is now realised, and its wealth becomes his own*]: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things [*here is a complete impoverishing of the Jewish Saul*], and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ [*this shows what Paul the Christian thought of the excellency of that which he had received in return for all the Jew had held so dear; it further shows that he not only knew Christ, but aspired to win Him as his*

own] and be found in Him [*so as to share His excellences, resurrection, glory, etc.*].”

This will suffice to illustrate our meaning. Another way of grasping a thought is to take it up and contemplate it, turning it about like a gem to watch the sparkling of its facets. Take, for instance, the thought *God is* (Heb. xi. 6). The mind might exercise itself on this as follows:—

This is the great fundamental thought of religion. It has been usual for men of all ages, nations, and creeds to believe in a Being possessed of attributes infinitely surpassing the human; and the conception of such a Being underlies all mythologies and religions. But here is more than a shadowy idea; here it is asserted that faith in His actual, personal, present existence is essential to all acceptable worship. If He *ever* existed, He must have *always* existed; for none of the forces of nature could have originated Him in time. But if He existed from all eternity, He must be self-existent and therefore independent of all things. But if so, all things must be dependent on Him, for none of them is able to originate or sustain itself. But if ever He existed, He exists now; and if anywhere, then everywhere, and therefore here. Therefore “in Him we live, and move, and have our being.” And if this be true as a matter

of fact, it is not only a great religious truth, but is the corner-stone of all science, and of nature itself. God is, *and therefore all things are*. Then the universe is the embodiment of His ideal, and a mirror in which we may behold the Invisible. But if He is, He is absolute in His authority and power; and the future of the universe, as it depends on His will, depends on His character. Is there any fuller description to be found of Him than nature supplies? etc.

Thus we might follow on to Scripture, and to the assurance there given "that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

THE KEY OF EXPERIENCE.

Experience is often the best key to Scripture. Texts, now quite closed against the young preacher, will display their wealth when this key has unlocked them. In this way many sermons are born of the preacher's experience; and though he does not tell the congregation why he is preaching from "the joy of the Lord is your strength," yet as he unfolds the nature of this joy, and shows how it becomes the Christian's strength, for duty, temptation, affliction, etc., he may be simply declaring what he is now realising. Such preaching is wonderfully real, fresh, and powerful, because the preacher is so sure of

his ground; it comes from the heart, and it goes to the heart.

“What we have felt and seen,
With confidence we tell.”

In time, as the result of daily growth in grace and knowledge, Scripture becomes so illustrated and confirmed by experience, that doctrine and life are blended, and the Bible becomes a life-record of trials and triumphs, of conflicts and consolations.

Yet while no amount of human learning will serve as a substitute for this key to Scripture, its use must be carefully guarded, or it may result in a most disagreeable egotism, or uncharitable narrowness.

Beware of perpetually parading your own experience *as such*. It is quite possible to use all the light this has cast on a text, without obtruding the source of your information. It were a pitiful thing if your hearers said of you, “He is always talking about himself, and telling his wonderful experiences.”

To avoid the risk of narrowness you should study the experience of others, so as to become acquainted with the variety of the Spirit's operations. It is quite natural that you should present the truth as you received it; hence every preacher has his own peculiar way of putting the gospel.

But John must remember there is a Gospel according to Mark; and Peter must not forget that Paul speaks of "my gospel"; and Paul in his turn must bear in mind that to James the gospel is the "perfect law of liberty." These views are not conflicting, but complementary; and a complete presentation of the truth will include them all and many more, for the gospel is many-sided, and, like a finely cut diamond, sends its lustre into every eye that beholds it.

Men converted as the Philippian jailer was, are in danger of doubting the reality of Lydia's conversion, and of cherishing a very scanty respect for the piety of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa. The preacher must beware of making a Procrustean¹ bed of his own experience, or he will create sad havoc among those in whom the Spirit has wrought as truly as in himself, though in a different manner.

Many opportunities for the study of Christian experience will occur in connection with your work. As the eloquent Apollos was greatly indebted to Aquila and Priscilla, so, after a village service, when you go to tea with some homely

¹Procrustes, a celebrated highwayman of Attica, tied his victims on an iron bed, and either stretched out or cut off their legs to adapt them to its length.

couple you may often draw them into a conversation which will do you more good than your sermon has done them. Every anxious inquirer it is your privilege to point to Christ is an "object lesson" helping you to trace the methods of the Spirit in His various dealings with the souls of men. By the bed of sickness and in the chamber of death, you may learn what are those portions of truth which most deeply impress the heart, and which afford the strongest consolations. In the Methodist Church, the Class Meetings, Love-feasts, and Fellowship Meetings afford the preacher invaluable opportunities for becoming acquainted with "applied theology," and for gauging the spiritual condition of those among whom he is called to labour.

But there is one point of doctrine which may be best studied from within, namely, that of Human Depravity. Only know yourself, and you will know that within you are seeds of every kind of evil only waiting their chance of growth. This is the worst sample of depravity you will ever meet with, simply because you can examine it more fully than any other. If you thoroughly know yourself, you know what human nature is. So exactly does heart answer to heart that if you sketch others from what you have observed in yourself, they will often suppose you are inti-

mately acquainted with their past life. This puts you on common ground with them, and gives occasion for preaching to them the Saviour who meets your own deepest needs.

As "walking the hospitals" is an essential part of a physician's training, because it gives him familiarity with all kinds of diseases and their remedies; so it is essential to the preacher that he should throw himself heartily into the midst of those scenes in which human sin and misery are brought under Divine treatment. And as the tourist who has travelled amongst the mountains can see more in paintings or photographs of mountain scenery than the uninitiated, and can read descriptions of such scenery with keener relish; so the preacher's own experience of the anxieties and joys of the Christian life enables him to profit the more, both from his converse with penitents and believers, and from the study of Christian biography.

THE BIBLE AND HOW TO STUDY IT.

The Bible is a unique collection of ancient volumes forming a sacred library. Divided, as we have it, into sixty-six books, it is the product of no one age, but of at least a millennium and a half; and of many authors. Yet, through all the ages and the writers, the one Divine Spirit has so breathed

that it is to us and to all the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

While the Bible claims a position and treatment of its own, it also, as a book, claims the common rights of all books. As it comes to us, it is divided into chapters and verses; sometimes regardless of the sense. It is only fair to remember that this is a comparatively modern device, exceedingly useful for the purpose of reference, but interfering sadly with the continuity of thought essential to a proper interest in the narrative. This often leads to chapters being read as if they stood alone, and verses being picked out and used in a manner quite inconsistent with their context. Probably there is no other book that would bear such treatment so well; still it is not fair to treat it in this way. It comes to us as a translation, therefore many of its lesser beauties as a literary composition are lost to us. Its poetry is turned into prose, and its Eastern figures appear in a Western dress.

Not only so, but the growth of language and the development of the human intellect have to be taken into account. The first chapters of Genesis enshrine histories handed down from the earliest ages, before science in the modern sense of the term was dreamt of; and these

were couched in such language as was available at the time. If this is borne in mind, when we throw these histories into the crucible of modern criticism, instead of being surprised that they do not brighten out into the definiteness of the clearly-cut terms of modern science, we shall wonderingly recognise in them such a marvellous general agreement with the assured results of present-day inquiry, as will convince us that the original fount of the knowledge they convey could be no other than the Creator Himself.

It is observable, too, that modes of thought, and therefore of expression, in olden time differed from those of the present age. If the writers expressed themselves at all, they must say what they thought *as they thought it*; to do otherwise, to conceive of things as we do, and express themselves as we should, would have made their message unintelligible to their own age, and would have distorted their own individuality. This should be borne in mind in reading such passages as—"The Lord met Moses, and sought to kill him;" "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart;" "O Lord, why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways, and hardened our hearts from Thy fear?" "I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau;" and, "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren,

and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."

Its mode of dealing with human nature is in accordance with the manners and customs of the age and country of its origin. Hence the mirror is held up to nature in a way that sometimes shocks our sense of propriety, and the depravity of man is sketched in its native hideousness. Yet we are really gainers by this, for the sketches are so given as to show vice in its true loathsomeness, and to furnish by the recital of crime an antidote against it.

Nor must we be selfish in our demands on Holy Writ. It has its message to every land and every age. If it had been conceived and uttered so as specially to fit our times and language, then had others been neglected; but coming in an old-world dress in the grandest language of antiquity, and with its more modern portion in the rich Grecian tongue, it furnishes a fountain of Truth from which all languages may drink abundantly, and presents great living principles of godliness suited to all ages and nations.

Running through this marvellous volume, like a golden thread, is the revelation God has been pleased to make of Himself in connection with the great purpose of human redemption. As it is unfolded before us from the first enigmatical

indication to Adam, through the promises to Abraham, the types and symbols of the Mosaic economy, the glimpses afforded to the Prophets, till the Voice in the Wilderness proclaims the Advent of the Lamb of God and the Word leads us on to the consummation of the world's redemption on Calvary and the gift of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, we note that in all God is more and more clearly revealing Himself, till we recognise in Him our Father, whose very name is Love. Well does He bear the name JEHOVAH, I AM THAT I AM, for He is the same to all ages and lands; so that the manifestations of Himself given in the Scriptures are an unveiling of Deity to us, as really as to those to whom the revelation was first made.

Consequently the Bible can never lose its value; while the oldest, it is yet the newest of books. The Spirit breathed into it still dwells in it, and speaks to the devout reader. And as the preacher seeks his message here, he will find that the Spirit delights to become to him "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation."

This, then, is your text-book, and you should secure a copy in strong binding for constant use. It is to be your companion for life, so it is worth while to choose one of such a size as will be most convenient for use, in clear type and with refer-

ences. The Rev. A. E. Gregory advises: "Every Bible student should have a good STUDY BIBLE, either interleaved or with ample margins. Let it be strongly bound, for it is to be a lifelong companion, and one with which you are to have daily communion. Mark it freely, and let all your study and reading centre round it. Preserve in it references to the best expositions and illustrations with which you become acquainted, and thus make it a storehouse ever growing richer and fuller." If the Oxford *Helps* are not bound with it, they should be obtained separately; they are invaluable to Bible students.

A preacher should read the Bible all through. This may easily be accomplished in less than a year at the rate of four chapters a day, but it is far better to take a book at a sitting if possible; or, in the case of the longer books, to read a good section, so that you may soon go through it, and gain a general idea of its contents from Genesis to the Revelation. For this purpose the Revised Version is much to be preferred, both for its greater accuracy and because it is printed in paragraphs, so that the continuity of thought is not broken.

But this is only preliminary to a more detailed and careful study. If a short portion is habitually read before private prayer, it will be helpful both

in increasing one's knowledge of Holy Writ, and as a preparation for communion with God. The profit of this practice may be increased by joining one of the Bible and Prayer Unions.

"Search the Scriptures." Trace through the sacred books the gradual unfolding of the revelation God has therein made of Himself. Observe how the purpose of redemption, ever present to the Divine mind, was made known by slow degrees adown the ages; how a higher standard of morality was enjoined as men were prepared to receive it; and how human responsibility was ever in proportion to privilege. Study the teachings of the New Testament, as they are contained in figure and bud in the Old; see how only one great salvation is revealed throughout, so that "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." A preacher should live in the Bible; its paths should be to him as pleasant walks in Eden, along which he loves to wander in converse with God. Ordinary Christians may be content with a small Bible consisting of a few favourite chapters, but "the man of God" who would be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," must be acquainted with "every Scripture inspired of God." He should familiarise himself with Bible characters till they live again in his imagination. So thoroughly should his

mind be imbued with Scripture, that the things of daily life should be seen in the light of its teaching, till every incident is suggestive of some text or precept or proverb, and the arena of life becomes a cyclopedia of biblical illustration. This is one of Moody's strong points. His addresses are saturated with Scripture; he makes the Bible live before us, and his message comes fraught with the authority of Holy Writ.

It is astonishing what a wealth of meaning ordinary readers of Scripture overlook. They are like tourists traversing a lovely country rich in mineral wealth, who never search below the surface. Moody advises reading with a view to special points; such, for instance, as to observe what St. John says about *believing*, and how all through his Gospel he keeps in view his main purpose as expressed in chap. xx. 31. He suggests a careful study of the *seventeen private interviews with Christ* which John records in his Gospel, and the *seven things* which he says *we know* in his First Epistle. This kind of study is particularly helpful to preachers in supplying illustrations and furnishing new sermon matter.

New interest may be thrown into Bible work by selecting some special topic, and, with the aid of a good Concordance and the marginal references, finding out all the Bible says about it. The

graces of the Christian character studied in this way will furnish excellent results; so will many of their opposites.

The leading doctrines of our holy faith should be carefully studied as they are set forth not only in scattered texts, but more especially as they are dealt with at length in the great Epistles, and as they are illustrated in the recorded experiences of the apostles and their contemporaries. In this way we gain glimpses of theology embodied in the life. Look, for instance, at Paul and Silas praying and singing in prison, "glorying in tribulations"; or at the parable of the Vine in the light of Paul's experience, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," and let his life furnish the filling in of the picture. Or study the supporting power of "that blessed hope," as illustrated in Paul the prisoner saying, "The time of my departure is at hand."

The histories and narratives of Scripture will amply repay careful reading, and the biographies are fascinating and instructive in the highest degree. "What a marvellous portrait gallery is that which begins with Adam, and is followed by such a procession of patriarchs, soldiers, statesmen, singers, prophets, rulers, apostles, mingled with humble maidens, servants, and little children. Some of these characters—such as Enoch, Gaius,

Demas, and Tertius—are painted in a single sentence. Out of all this immense gallery you can select subjects for scores—yes, for hundreds—of sermons.”¹

The wealth stored in some single chapters is amazing. As a special instance, we may mention the fourth chapter of St. John, which would alone furnish a whole volume of sermons. The following list by no means exhausts it. The Man at the well, vers. 6, 7, 8; race feuds, 9; the living water, 10–14; conviction, 19; questions of ritual, 20; spiritual worship, 21–24; the long-expected Messiah, 25, 26; Christianity and woman, 27; the female evangelist, 28–30; the expulsive power of a new affection, 28–33; the hidden manna, 34; the two harvests, 35, 36; sowing and reaping, 37, 38; faith grounded on tradition, testimony, acquaintance with Christ, 25, 39, 41, 42; faith, tested and triumphant, confirmed, 46–54. Yet every one of these topics is capable of instructive and profitable treatment.

There are similar mines in the eighth of Romans, the fifth of Second Corinthians, and the first of the First Epistle of Peter; but it seems almost invidious to mention a few when there are so many almost equally rich. A careful and exhaustive study of one such chapter will make the student

¹ Cuyler.

sensibly richer, and will increase his pulpit power more than a month's careless reading of the daily chapter.

The prayers of St. Paul like mines of gold will yield a handsome return to the patient and diligent worker; and he who thoroughly masters the Epistle to the Romans, and makes it his own, will entitle himself to a good degree as a Christian theologian.¹

It would be a great help to young preachers to join the Union for Biblical and Homiletic Study (*Preacher's Magazine*). So long as one works alone he is in danger of being indefinite in his studies; but with a prescribed course and occasional examinations, a stimulus is given for steady work, and opportunity is afforded for testing progress. Full particulars of the Union are given in the *Preacher's Magazine*. We advise all young preachers to join the three first sections—namely, those for the study of Homiletics, Systematic Theology, and Biblical Study. Those whose early opportunities have been good, may also, with ad-

¹ Many most valuable hints on the study of the Bible are given in a sixpenny pamphlet by Professor Findlay (*The Study of the Bible*. London: C. H. Kelly, 2 Castle Street, City Road, E.C.), which we strongly recommend our readers to procure for themselves. Its value is greatly enhanced by the information it gives on commentaries and other works helpful to preachers.

Students present their studies, or tests, or the re-
sulting exercises—usually, the study of New
England Slavery and Old Testament History.

[illegible]

There is one thing I wish to mention before we close
of a friend, a neighbor, a fellow worker in the
country. We have received the following
letter, recently received from a good friend
and fellow worker, which is a very good example
of what a very young man, who is a very
young man, can do. It is a very good
example, and would be a very good
example. We have the honor to send a word to the
author, and to the publisher, and to the
author, and to the publisher, and to the
author, and to the publisher, and to the

a picture gallery in which the works of the Great Master are exhibited.

We gain that we may give; and we can only give what we gain: hence the importance of so observing a scene as to make it our own. It is not sufficient to take a general view of a landscape, the details of the picture should also be carefully observed; the height and contour of the mountains; the windings of the river, or of the shore of the lake; the nature of the rocks, the kinds of trees; the colour of the heather, gorse, or other plants on the hillsides; the tints of foliage, sky, or cloud; and whatever else goes to complete the picture, so that you may carry it in your memory, to enjoy in retrospect, or to describe graphically upon occasion.

But it is not from the extended view alone that we may gather instruction. Reclining on the hillside, or seated in the garden, or walking by the way, we have within reach evidences of the Divine Presence and Wisdom. The telescope, too, brings us into fellowship with the vast and distant, while the microscope reveals wonders in organisms almost infinitely minute.

These things we should observe, not as mere naturalists, but as preachers, that we may gain a larger knowledge of the God whom we proclaim. Through neglect of His works in nature, many

preachers appear to regard God as a theological Being interested only in religious matters; whereas He is the great efficient Cause of which nature is the effect. He has to do with all material things; He is the God of the body as of the soul, of time as of eternity.

It is sometimes alleged that science gives a more worthy idea of Deity than the Bible does. We do not think so; for surely the revelation of redeeming love, furnished in the Word, is far grander than anything nature can teach. Still we willingly admit that the ideas of time and space furnished by science do assist a devout mind to take a larger view of the perfections of the Deity. All truth belongs to the Christian preacher, however revealed, and we should avail ourselves of every opportunity for enlarging our acquaintance with Him—

“ Whose temple is all space;
Whose altar, earth, sea, sky.”

If to this study of nature you add a similar interest in the affairs of daily life, you will find these equally full of instruction. The eye trained to see so as to perceive, and the ear trained to hear so as to understand, will observe many things which the majority of mankind pass by unnoticed; and a devout mind, viewing all things in their relation to God and His Word, will find that

society furnishes a perpetual comment on Holy Scripture, written in the ever-varied experiences of human hearts and human lives.

In this way you may generally provide your own illustrations. Incidents observed—time, place, and names being omitted—will often afford anecdotes fresh from the mint, while your memory will readily furnish materials out of which invention and imagination may construct parables and suppositions in true accord with nature and life. Just as an inventor is more likely to succeed when well acquainted with previous inventions in the same line, so the preacher who has a good store of actual observations is best able to sketch imaginary pictures.

The very best illustrations of the way in which such observations may be turned to account are furnished in our Saviour's discourses. These are full of references to nature, and to the common incidents of life; so full that I need only refer you to them. Happy will that preacher be who, in this respect, is "as his Master"; he shall not want an audience: the common people will hear him gladly.

THE STUDY OF HUMAN NATURE.

"The proper study of mankind is *man*." While a heathen philosopher could say, "I am a man,

and I count nothing foreign to myself that concerns humanity," it is at once the common remark and the scandal of a Christian age, that "one half of the world doesn't know how the other half lives."

Ministers have sometimes incurred the reproach of being "too bookish"; of loving the retirement of the study more than the busy haunts of men and the homes of the people; and it is commonly contended that the lay preacher, by reason of his daily contact with men in business, is better able to bring the truth home to their mind and heart. Whether cleric or lay, it is certain that no preacher can either rightly understand or deliver his message, unless he has a fair acquaintance with human nature and the facts of everyday life.

For his message is not a mere doctrinal statement, elaborated in the study to be delivered in a lecture hall to trained students; nor is the congregation an ideal church waiting to be edified; but the message consists of great eternal principles, which have to be translated from their Eastern, old-world form into their application to Western nineteenth century life; and the congregation is a miscellaneous company of commonplace individuals, possessing very hazy notions of eternal things, but with most definite convictions of the reality of the present life and the difficulty of making both ends meet.

While, therefore, you are a "man of God," you must also, in the best sense of the term, be "a man of the world"; so acquainted with life in all its phases that you can meet your hearers on their own ground. Sympathy with man must be carefully cultivated; and, while in the study you carefully and prayerfully elaborate your message, you must ever keep the people in view.

You have to serve *the present age*. It is well occasionally to read ancient history, but do not neglect the newspaper. Unless you are acquainted with what is going on in the world, you will not be prepared to lead in public prayer, nor to speak home to the thought of your people.

Nor should you be satisfied with such a knowledge of men as all gain by the contact of social life. You should know their haunts and homes, and make a careful study of human nature whenever you get the opportunity. Ever carry an observant eye and a sympathetic heart. If in the country, carefully observe the farm labourers at their toil, and note the various operations carried on at the several seasons; if in the town, watch how the artisans, or the factory hands, do their work; study both the work and the workers; watch the buyers and the sellers in the market-place, observe how much better some succeed than others, and see if you can discover why.

Study the chosen pleasures of the people. Many, alas! delight in drinking and gambling: a pipe is the chief solace of some lives; music and dancing the climax of others. There are some who find their relaxation in a quiet time for reading, or for the pursuit of some favourite study; or in painting or music; or in companionships found at the Y.M.C.A.; but these are comparatively few. On the other side are those who find pleasure in sins which hide themselves in darkness.

Study the woes of humanity. There are those to whom life is a long and weary waiting for the grave. There are women whose only "outings" are to the shop and the chapel; who are mother, nurse, housekeeper, general servant, and landlady, all in one, and who try to be Christians too! And there are women who are all of these *except* the Christian; and if their life is a weariness, and their house is not a home, it is no wonder. There are wives whose misfortune it is that they are not widows, and there are children who, unfortunately, are not orphans. There are some whose life is a ceaseless round of monotonous toil, doing the same thing again and again for years together; and there are others to whom life is a ceaseless struggle with hunger and misfortune, they cannot die, but they find it hard work to live.

Remember your congregation is made up of such people; a mixture of all sorts, from the mule-like sinner who boasts "You are not a-goin' to frighten me," to the poor nervous creature who "can't bear to hear anything dreadful"; from the quick-witted who will catch a mere hint, to the dullard who will understand nothing unless it is put in the simplest possible manner. Then there are weary mothers whose hunger for the "bread of life" is such that they feel they must come if possible; and there are masters so full of worldly care, and men so tired with overwork, that they are not likely to profit unless there is life enough in the sermon to keep them awake, and sympathy enough to bring it home to their heart. There are children who want the preacher to tell them a pretty tale, and old folk who need encouragement amid their infirmities. If to this we add that their spiritual conditions present every phase, from the earnest saint to the hardened sinner, and that scarcely two families are alike in their home experiences and providential circumstances, you will see that the work of giving to each his portion of meat in due season, is such as requires, along with the best wit of man, the special guidance and help of the Spirit of God.

"Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them": only as you enter into their circum-

stances, and cherish a deep sympathy, can you acceptably present the gospel to the sons and daughters of sin and want and woe. But true sympathy must rest on knowledge such as can only be gained by personal observation. This will considerably modify some sermons. It will lead you to teach the duty of private prayer so that it may be attended to by those who live in single-room tenements; it will lead you to set forth Christ, not in the way which might seem the most rhetorical, but in the way best suited to win for Him the confidence of the sinful and the poor. You will feel that instead of lecturing on medicine in general, you have definite individual cases to treat, and you must exhibit the true remedies. In fact, there is nothing like this to make you feel the intense reality of sin and salvation, and of your work, as it tells at once on the present and eternal welfare of your hearers.

While thus you become familiar with the characteristics of your people, you should look below the surface and inquire how they became what they are. How far is the wretched condition of some the result of a wilful choice of sin? and how far are they the victims of untoward circumstances? You will find that many have just drifted, never having had the moral strength to stand against the tide of surrounding influences.

Some of these will be only too thankful for a helping hand and a kind word; they would be glad to be different if some friend would stand by them, but they cannot stand alone. The more you can search out the hidden sins of the heart, the pride, the covetousness, the appetite, the sinful desire, which underlie the sins so rife in society, the better you will be able to grapple with the conscience of the sinner, and to compel him to feel that God through you is speaking home to his heart.

It is highly instructive to observe how Christ, in His ministry, was constantly using His unique knowledge of human nature. "He knew what was in man," and He showed it by often answering their hearts rather than their words; craftiness, covetousness, hypocrisy, He at once detected and exposed; but the poor, the penitent, and the suffering ever found in Him a sympathetic friend.

Very admirably did Paul follow in His steps, becoming "all things to all men" that he might "by all means save some." His plan seems to have been to begin on ground common to him and them, and by clear argument and loving appeal to endeavour to lift them up to his level; not so much by denouncing their sins as by showing them a more excellent way. Thus he spoke to the heathen of the God who gave them

rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; he reasoned with the Roman judge on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; he quoted their own poets to the Athenians; but among the Jews he appealed to the Scriptures, whose authority they could not dispute.

THE MEMORY.

We can only attempt here to furnish a few useful hints as to the use and training of the memory. Systems have their use for special feats, and for some trade purposes; but if the natural memory is fairly good, it will be easier to train it for the pulpit than to adopt a system.

The true art of memory is the art of attention. The memory is often blamed for forgetting what was never put into its keeping. No one can keep what he has not got; but frequently events are so carelessly witnessed, and facts so thoughtlessly read or heard of, that the mind never really grasps them; and then the memory is blamed for not retaining them! This is not fair.

What the mind clearly perceives and definitely grasps, the memory is likely to retain. Therefore our first advice is: Get a clear apprehension of what you wish to remember. Concentrate your mind upon it, and take it with all its details and surroundings fairly into your consciousness so that

it becomes a reality to you. If it be a landscape, gaze on it long and thoughtfully as already advised; if a fact, fix your mind intelligently on it for a short space; if a thought, grasp it clearly in all its bearings; if an illustration, connect it mentally with the text or teaching it is intended to illustrate.

Impressions may be most readily received and retained when the mind is fresh; but some find that if a sermon be reviewed the last thing at night, "sleeping on it" helps to fix it in the memory.

Repetition, whether mental or vocal, is a most important aid, care being taken that each repetition is perfectly correct, so as to create and deepen only one impression; then in time of need the thought or fact is most likely to come out in the only form in which the mind has ever known it. This is illustrated in the way in which our favourite and oft-read chapters adhere in the memory, though we have never learned them; so that if a verse or a word is incorrectly read, we detect the error instantly.

There are other methods of assisting the memory, such as associating new facts with those of a similar class already well established in the mind; connecting information with the place and circumstances of its acquisition, so that one recalls the

other, just as a visit to the home of one's childhood recalls the thoughts and experiences of early life; or the information may lie in the mind connected with the person from whom it was received, or the book which furnished it. Some have the habit of committing the page to memory, so as mentally to see each idea as it stands on the paper.

Generally the memory may be strengthened in any desired direction by special training, hence various classes of trade memories. Thus it may be trained for the pulpit so as to fit your own style of preparation; but if you expect honest work from the memory, you must deal honestly with it.

As a rule the logical memory is the most useful to the preacher. This has regard to the line of thought rather than to the run of words. It grasps a subject in its main outline and more important details, and it remembers them as the several parts which make up a whole course of reasoning or appeal. The nature and value, also the method of acquiring this memory, will be better understood when sermon-making has been discussed.

Preparing for the Pulpit.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom."
—COL. iii. 16.

"His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night."—PS. i. 2.

"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."—1 TIM. iv. 15, 16.

"My heart is writing a good matter: I speak the things which I have made touching the King: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer."—PS. xlv. 1.

"The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth."—ECCLES. xii. 10.

"The authority of the Christian preacher is the inspired Word. His ministry is founded upon a revelation. His sermon is modern; his gospel is everlasting; his illustrations are a thousand; his message one."—DR. PARKER.

CHAPTER III.

PREPARING FOR THE PULPIT.

SOME object to a careful preparation for the pulpit; like Sammy Hick, the Yorkshire village blacksmith, they prefer to give the word to the people "hot off the bakstone," fearing that if they were too long in preparing, it would get cold before it was delivered. But surely it is possible to gain the light which comes from prayerful meditation without sacrificing the heat of a vivid consciousness. If the fire burns in the preacher, the congregation will feel the heat; but if the truth so quickly loses its interest to him that he cannot trust himself to meditate upon it beforehand, how can he hope it will permanently influence others?

Both as believers and as preachers, we should cherish a strong faith in the perpetual presence and continual assistance of the Holy Spirit. He has come to fill the place left vacant by our Lord's ascension; to abide with us, and in us, as the com-

panion of our daily life, our remembrancer of Christ and His teachings, and our guide into all the truth. It thus becomes our privilege to live in the Spirit, and to walk in the Spirit. And if we do this, we shall as surely enjoy His aid in the preparation as in the delivery of our sermons; and from the effect of the truth on ourselves we shall know what to expect from it in others.

It is a mistake to look for supernatural flashes of inspiration and insight into the Word as the ordinary type of instruction. As a plant requires to enjoy awhile the light and warmth of the sun before it appreciably grows, yet is surely growing all the time, and by degrees is able to appropriate these celestial influences in larger and larger measure; so must we live in habitual fellowship with the Spirit that we may become more subtle to perceive the truth, more apt to apprehend and remember it, and come more fully under its control. To gracious minds more grace is manifested; as we dwell in love, we grow in the knowledge of love. "To him that hath shall be given."

We have already seen that one's own experience is the key which alone can admit us into many a secret treasury of divine truth; hence that our ministry may maintain its freshness and power, our experience must be ever growing. Joy fades and interest fails if it has only old truths and

experiences to rest on ; and the ministry founded on them becomes tame, insipid, and powerless. But the Word of God is fathomless, and the riches of Christ are unsearchable ; and if mind and heart be brought into accord with the whole truth, and we only desire to know the mind of the Spirit, a growing appreciation of the truth will make our sermons glow with ever fresh interest. From the mind full of light, and the heart full of love, the truth will pour forth in " thoughts that breathe," and " words that burn."

Thus it will be seen that in advocating a most careful system of preparation, we do not set up human reason in place of the Holy Spirit's guidance, but advise the bringing of all the powers God has given into such fellowship and harmony with the Spirit, that they shall be purified, strengthened, and guided. The Spirit works through the mind and heart of the preacher, and in the quiet communing of prayerful meditation and Scripture searching He instructs him and brings him into sympathy with his Master and His message. The whole work of preparation should be begun, continued, and ended in conscious fellowship with the Spirit.

CHOOSING A TEXT.

Very pleasant it is when texts choose their preacher, fixing themselves on his mind and heart

with a persistency that will not be denied; then to a great extent they bring the sermon with them.

But it is not always so. Most preachers know what it is to hunt for a text. This is often a very uncertain and very unsatisfactory occupation, consuming time and labour which might be better employed. We will, therefore, supply some suggestions and cautions which may relieve the difficulty.

Never forget that you do not go on this warfare at your own charges. A herald seeks his message from his sovereign, and we should seek ours from above. If the waiting-time is spent at the throne of grace it will not be spent in vain, for *we* shall be under preparation whether the message is or not. It is well sometimes to be thus "detained before the Lord." As Kidder well observes: "A moment's reflection upon the eternal consequences that may issue from the preaching of a single sermon . . . should be sufficient to effectually rebuke the haphazard carelessness and the reckless self-conceit with which texts are sometimes taken and treated, and to impress every true minister of the gospel with the duty of choosing his texts in such a frame of mind as may harmonise with the Divine guidance."

Generally it is best to avoid very grand texts, because of the painful and disappointing contrast which might appear between text and sermon. Nor should a preacher attempt a subject manifestly

unsuited to his position, age, experience, or education. A young beginner should not lecture parents on the training of their children, or he will be more likely to provoke a smile than to promote edification. The higher experiences of the Christian life may be left for those who have lived with Christ sufficiently long to become familiar with them. The "Higher Criticism," and similar topics, should only be handled in public by those qualified to do it fairly and safely.

Some texts are *too large* for a single discourse; and if you are led to choose such, you should select and state the special topic on which you design to dwell, or the point of view from which you purpose to consider the subject. John iii. 16 is such a text. Almost every word of this marvellous epitome of the gospel might be dwelt upon; and if full consideration were granted to the entire text, time, strength, and patience would alike fail pulpit and pew. Yet this text might be taken and used quite legitimately as the gospel counterpart of the story of the Brazen Serpent.

Beware of taking a mere phrase and putting your own meaning on it, or of choosing so small a text that the greater part of the sermon has to be brought to the text rather than taken out of it. The Bible should be treated honestly, and its real meaning brought to light. On this point St. Paul's

example cannot be too highly commended: "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." It would be a solemn trifling with the Word to preach on religion as a proper preparation for death, from the phrase "Ready to die" [St. Luke vii. 2]; or to manufacture a metaphysical dissertation on the words, "Here am I."

A sermon may be either TOPICAL or TEXTUAL; that is, it may either deal with a subject, or expound and apply a text. But often there is a happy combination of the two methods, and the text is so wisely chosen that its legitimate exposition will unfold a subject and illustrate it in a most interesting manner. Thus Divine sovereignty may be expounded from the words of Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. iv. 34, 35, or "The Happiness of Holiness" from Ps. cxix. 165. So special characteristics or graces may be treated in connection with the history of representative Bible characters, and their strong point stated in the text thus, "Abraham believed God," "The patience of Job," "The man Moses was very meek"; or Christian heroism may be instanced from the words of Paul, "None of these things move me."

If, as already advised, you live in the Bible, and walk amid the scenes of nature, and of daily life in happy fellowship with God and your work, you will find texts and subjects in profusion. The seasons as they come and go will bring their suggestions. Thus in the spring one loves to preach from such texts as, "Thou renewest the face of the earth," "Life . . . more abundantly," "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work"; or, "The flowers appear upon the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come." In summer, nature revelling in luxury suggests, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works," etc.; "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness"; or, in the haying time, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever." When the fields are white unto the harvest, "One soweth and another reapeth" is in season; or, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest . . . shall not cease"; or, "So is the kingdom of God as if a man should cast seed into his field," etc.; or an awakening sermon may be preached from the parable of the Wheat and Tares. Winter may not seem equally fertile of topics; but "Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfilling His word," and "Thou hast made . . . winter," may remind us that the sterner aspects of nature as of Providence have their place in the Divine purpose and

their influence on human destiny, and "The haven was not commodious to winter in" may be turned to account by way of showing that certain positions, practices, and friendships, though pleasant enough in the summer of life, should nevertheless be abandoned, because, otherwise we shall find that when the winter of life comes, they will afford us neither comfort nor safety.

We strongly advise the utilising of the Christian seasons. Each brings its own message, and in a Christian community every one is more or less influenced by it. It is wise to meet the natural expectation by dwelling on the Incarnation of Christ at Christmas, His death and resurrection at Easter, and His bestowal of the Holy Ghost at Whitsuntide. Each of these topics is so suggestive, and may be viewed in so many lights, that there should be no difficulty in providing a fresh sermon on each of them as the season returns.

Every anniversary should command a special sermon. It is most disappointing to attend a harvest festival in a decorated church and hear nothing about the harvest. If the preacher for the day cannot discourse about it, he should obtain a supply who can. Surely it might be possible to preach from some such text as, "The Lord of the harvest," "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due

season," "The harvest is the end of the world"; or, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Or if it be a Sunday-school anniversary, some topic bearing on the welfare of children should be handled in a way they can appreciate, such as, "I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth," "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures," etc.; "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones"; or, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." On the occasion of a church anniversary, some notice should be taken of the privileges and responsibilities of public worship, and such texts as the following would be in place: "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house," "My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation," "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob"; or, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts." And when the return of the missionary anniversary reminds us of the needs of the heathen world, we are always disappointed if the preacher does not select some suitable text, such as, "The harvest is great, and the labourers are few," etc.; or, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations"; or, "There are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."

In addition to these, Temperance Sunday, Chil-

dren's Sunday, and Peace Sunday call for special notice ; and there are times when men's minds are so excited with politics that it is hard to impress them at all unless some topic is chosen bearing on the question of the day. Now the pulpit should never be used for the advocacy of party politics, but it is sometimes bound to speak clearly and strongly when temperance and other moral issues are at stake. Yet apart from this, the excitement attending a General Election may be turned to good account by discoursing on such a text as, "They do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible"; or if there is danger that Christian people may be carried away by the tide, you might warn them from the text, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise ; redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

But after all special seasons have been duly used, a number of Sabbaths will remain on which one subject may appear as appropriate as another. Many preachers, too, require sermons of general interest and utility, which may easily be adapted to a score of different congregations, and which may live many years—and grow too. In such cases there is a process of evolution accompanied by natural selection, and the survival of the fittest.

In selecting texts for general use, the preacher should consider *himself* and *his congregations*.

There is a certain useful limit within which you should consider yourself. Every man has his own cast of mind and style of expression. John cannot reason like Paul, and Peter will not take the pains which Luke will to trace everything up to its source; but we can neither spare the careful historian, the impetuous rhetorician, the skilful logician, nor the aged apostle of light and love. It is as true of spiritual as of natural capabilities, "Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that." We are strongest on our own lines, and provided this idea is not carried to excess, we shall do best by following those lines in the choice and treatment of subjects.

But a caution is needed. Unless the preacher is on his guard he will find himself continually riding his hobby till every one is tired of it—except himself, and he *ought* to be. Or he will so constantly dwell on similar themes that men will say, "It does not matter what text he takes, he always comes round to the same thing before he has done." Or he will choose easy texts just because they *are* easy, and thus neither himself nor his hearers will be stimulated to higher thought or feeling. With many this temptation is strengthened by the limited time available for preparation.

It is a standing reproach to young preachers, that they "rush in where angels fear to tread"; dealing boldly with texts from which their seniors shrink. But while avoiding this extreme, you should not decline a subject simply because it will cost you a good deal of study and reading. Sermons are generally worth what they cost. He who contents himself with doing easy sums in simple addition will never become a competent arithmetician; and he who always preaches from easy texts will never excel as a preacher. Rather choose subjects which will call into exercise all your resources; subjects which will necessitate searching the Scriptures, heart searching, and hard thinking; which will bring you to your knees, and lead you to seek a higher experience and a fresh enduement of light and power. Sermons which thus bless the preacher in their preparation, bless the congregation in their delivery, and the preacher has the satisfaction of feeling that he is not offering in the service of the sanctuary that which has cost him nothing.

Our congregations should ever be kept in view, that we may please them for their good to edification. We have a family to feed, so we must be careful to provide a sufficiency of nutritious, acceptable, and digestible food. Everything is good in its place, but time and place must always

be considered. It would be little short of wicked folly to discourse on the "Higher Criticism," to a rustic audience who know nothing about it; though to a certain class of young men whose minds are perplexed and whose piety is endangered by imperfect information on the subject, such a discourse from a competent preacher would be a word in season. Sometimes there is almost nothing for the lambs of the flock, though they are expected to be very good and to keep from bleating while the sheep are feeding. Sometimes hard-headed people are regaled with pretty little airy conceits, like placing thin bread and butter, or a few dainty biscuits, before a hungry hunter. Or in the midst of some great general distress, a theological argument on a point long since settled is pompously paraded; and troubled souls go away unfed and grieved. Preachers should take pains to become acquainted with the people, with their circumstances, their modes of thought, their spiritual state, their preferences, their sins, and their sorrows; so as to know how to meet their wants most effectually.

Never forget that a sermon is only a means to an end, not an end in itself. Your true business is, not to make sermons nor to preach them, but to save sinners and to edify believers. You should therefore choose texts with a definite

purpose, and keep that purpose steadily in view when preparing the sermon; this will ensure unity, directness, and consistency.

While the general aim of preaching may be expressed by the terms CONVERSION and EDIFICATION, each of these comprehends many particulars. The first includes the preaching of conviction of sin, repentance, the justice of God, His mercy to the penitent, the atonement, faith, justification, adoption, regeneration, etc. The second includes the preaching of Christ in all His offices and relations, and in all the fulness of His grace; the Spirit and His operations; the Divine Fatherhood, and the whole plan of redemption; exposition of Scripture, instruction in Christian doctrine, the privilege of prayer, encouragement and stimulus in the divine life; Christian morality, Sabbath observance, relative duties, exhortation to good works, etc.

Although use and wont have decreed that the sermon in the morning or afternoon should appeal more particularly to believers, and in the evening to the unconverted, and although this practice may correspond roughly with the character of the congregations, it is by no means wise to adhere too rigidly to this custom. Some Christians can only attend the evening service, and some ungodly people attend only in the morning or afternoon. An occasional change is profitable, and the two

classes of preaching are not mutually exclusive. The best sermons to believers have points which may in passing be applied powerfully to sinners; and evangelistic preaching should not consist merely of affectionate appeals, but should be based upon such statements of gospel truth as may edify even experienced believers.

In deciding the text to be used on any particular occasion, care should be taken to preserve a due variety; so that doctrine, precept, exposition of Scripture, Christian experience and encouragement, may in turn receive attention. For his own sake, too, the preacher should be careful to take so wide a range of topics that in course of time his mind becomes familiar with the whole field of divine revelation.

DIVISIONS.

A sermon should be a unity developing one theme with a definite purpose. The way of accomplishing this may vary, from the logical skeleton arrangement, so precious to our forefathers, to the undivided thought line used by some preachers of the present day. The first presents the subject in the form of an argument, the second in that of a growth.¹ Either method wisely followed will

¹ "The text ought to spring up as the root of your discourse, and send its trunk towering aloft as the central idea of that discourse. All the arguments, instructions, and exhortations

leave a definite impression on the congregation; in the one there is the logical conclusion with its uses, in the other the developed thought with its influence on heart and life. That which is common to both is *order of thought*; without which the discourse on good things is not a sermon at all, but a maze in which the preacher loses himself, while his hearers are bewildered.

Suitable divisions are of great importance to the preacher, as they enable him to see his way through a subject, and to remember and reproduce his argument with the least effort of memory. They also increase the interest and profit of the hearers, by enabling them to keep pace intelligently with the preacher.

Each text should be treated on its own merits, and in harmony with the aim and personality of the preacher, and the occasion on which the sermon is to be delivered. Consequently, no one method of division is of universal application, and many

are but as the boughs branching off from this central truth, giving breadth, vigour, and spiritual beauty to the whole organic production. The unity of your sermon—yes, and the spiritual power of it also—will commonly depend upon its adherence to the great divine truth contained in the inspired text. Remember that your text is God's part of your sermon; and from that should sprout out manifold vital and vigorous thoughts, like the fruit-laden limbs of a Bartlett pear tree."—
DR. CUYLER.

texts admit of various legitimate modes of treatment.

The time-honoured introduction, followed by firstly, secondly, thirdly, and in conclusion, is not to be despised; but sometimes more and sometimes fewer principal divisions are required.

Henry Ward Beecher says: "It is a good thing to select your text and unfold precisely its meaning and its context, and then to deduce from it certain natural lines of thought. But this is only one way. A descriptive sermon, an argumentative sermon, a poetical sermon, and a sermon of sentiment, have severally their own genius of form. I need not tell you that variety is, in the best sense of the term, the natural method." The substance of the rules laid down by Kidder in his *Homiletics* is—(1) Let the theme be single, and only one principle of division be followed; (2) Let that principle be the one most suitable; (3) Divisions should be few, and expressed clearly and briefly; (4) Comprehensive and exhaustive; (5) Co-ordinate; (6) Well arranged.

Divisions should be mutually exclusive, so that if a thought be in place under one head it should be out of place under any other. If the text, "I am the way . . . no man cometh unto the Father but by Me," were divided thus—(1) The way, (2) The way to the Father, (3) The only way,

inevitable confusion would arise in treating the first and second heads, because they overlap each other. It would be exceedingly difficult to treat of Christ as a way without any regard to the whence or the whither of that way, and thus the second part would be mixed up with the first. This confusion might be avoided by dividing thus—(1) Man's true home is with the Father; (2) Christ is the only way thither.

Divisions, if natural, represent *real cleavages of thought*, and are not mere lines drawn at will through the subject. They require to be discovered rather than made. They are there whether you find them or not; and if you fail to discover them, you are likely enough to use them without knowing it. So it is worth some trouble to make a true analysis of your subject, that you may present it in its natural order.

One method of getting at natural divisions is to allow the subject to settle down in your mind, and then in imagination to lift it up and place it before an ideal congregation. You would begin by introducing your subject, so as to bring them into sympathy with yourself, and inspire them with a desire to hear you further. Then you would lay down your principal proposition, or unfold the main topic; so that at an early stage of the discourse you would take them into the

heart of the subject. Next you would proceed to prove the main proposition, or enlarge upon the topic, till the proposition was proved beyond doubt, or the subject fully expounded. Finally, you would seek to induce suitable action or emotion as the result of these considerations; and this would be the conclusion of the whole matter. Thus we see the foundation in nature, of the four parts of an oration as laid down by Aristotle, namely, The Introduction, Proposition, Proof, and Conclusion.

Considerations of this kind will often assist you in deciding the form of the introduction. Take in imagination an average member of the congregation, and ask yourself, How should I introduce this subject to him? You will see at once, that as the purpose of an introduction is to introduce the subject and excite an interest in it, the style, length, matter, and manner of the introduction should depend, not only upon the nature of the topic, but also upon the state, in reference to it, of the minds of your hearers. When a subject is manifestly in season, it needs little introduction; but when no such previous interest exists, the introduction should be calculated to create it. In a matter of this sort, common sense is the best guide; you have an interest in your subject; you wish to bring your audience into sympathy with

yourself, and you take the shortest and most likely method of doing it. Thus the variety of introductions is too great to admit of useful classification. Whatever their form, they should be closely allied to the subject, so as really to "*introduce*" it; correct in taste and in subject matter; calm and hopeful; and while exciting a desire to know more, should not anticipate the main divisions by unfolding the theme in advance.

Next come THE MAIN DIVISIONS, which embody the subject and its amplification, or the proposition and its proof. These should set forth briefly and concisely as much of the text or subject as is to be taken into the sermon, and should be so stated as to run smoothly together. If one division be expressed in a word or phrase, the others should follow suit; else if propounded in order a strange sense of awkwardness is felt, as if an ass and an ox were yoked together. Such would be the case if in preaching on 1 John iv. 11, you announced as your divisions—(1) God's love to us; (2) Therefore we should love one another. Here it is not the idea but the expression that is in fault, as will be at once perceived if the form be altered thus—(1) God has manifested marvellous love to us; (2) Therefore we ought to love one another.

It is pleasant and easy when the text naturally divides itself, as does Rom. vi. 22—The Christian's

freedom, Servitude, Fruit, End; or as 1 Thess. i. 3, where we have—(1) The work of faith; (2) The labour of love; (3) The patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. So, too, in Rom. xii. 11, we have three rules for the believer's daily life—(1) Not slothful in business;¹ (2) Fervent in spirit; (3) Serving the Lord. But a preacher must not generally reckon upon so easy a task in arranging his discourse.

Very frequently the purpose and intended scope of a sermon will determine the divisions. One might choose the question in Ps. viii. 4—What is man? intending to descant on the strange and unique relationship of man to nature and to God. So he might proceed, in accordance with the Psalmist's train of thought, to consider—(1) The littleness of man in contrast with the material greatness of nature, or of the universe; (2) Man's greatness as the appointed lord over all mundane creatures; (3) Man's special honour as an object of Divine regard. But the same text might be taken with a view to show, in the light of Heb. ii. 6-10, that this lordship originally assigned to man has never been actually realised except in the ideal Man, the Lord Jesus Christ; who, as

¹ Of course, in preaching from this text, the R.V. rendering would be noted, *In diligence not slothful*. Dr. Beet translates, "In your earnestness not backward."

Man, is so exalted that all things are now put under Him. With this object in view, the preacher might rather lightly pass over the universe and man's physical unimportance, and show that man has proved a very imperfect lord of creation except as represented in the second Man, the Lord from heaven. So he might consider—(1) God's original purpose in respect of man; (2) That purpose frustrated by man's fall; (3) The purpose triumphantly achieved by the second Man. Or, lastly, the preacher might purpose, either in one sermon or in a series, to consider pretty fully the physical, mental, and moral characteristics of man, together with his relationship to the brute creation and to his Maker, and he would elaborate his divisions accordingly.

Sometimes, with a little thought, *an idea assumed but not plainly expressed may be brought up as a separate division and starting-point.* Thus Ps. xxiii. 3, where the Christian's liability to wander is assumed, may be thus divided—(1) The believer's liability to wander; (2) The Saviour's concern for his restoration; (3) His subsequent guidance in safe paths; and (4) The reason assigned for this, "for His Name's sake." Or, again it might be taken thus—(1) The proneness of the sheep to wander; (2) The ever watchful care of the Good Shepherd, as instanced—(i.) In reclaiming; (ii.) In

leading; and all this, too, out of pure love—for His Name's sake.

In expository preaching, *great care should be taken to give the exact meaning of the text before drawing inferences from it.* Take, for instance, Rom. viii. 28. Here, after a brief introduction, treating of the purpose of God to bring many sons to glory by conforming them to the image of His Son, we might propose—(1) To explain the apostle's assertion. In doing this we might note especially the sense in which the term "all things" is to be understood, and what is the "good" intended; further, we observe that all things are not said to *be* good, but to "*work together for good*," namely, with a view to the accomplishment of the Divine purpose. (2) To consider the ground of our knowledge of this fact, which is threefold; our assured confidence in God Himself, the knowledge that we are in the train of His purpose, and our experience of the way in which many most unpleasant matters have already ended well. Then follows the application of the subject, where we learn—(i.) Not to judge hastily of Divine Providence; (ii.) To lean on God's arm when we cannot see His face; (iii.) To co-operate with Him in carrying out His great purpose.

Sometimes a Scripture narrative may be profitably handled in the way of drawing out the lessons it

carries. Let us take the narrative contained in Mark vi. 45–52. A pleasant subject this for springtime, commencing with a picture of pilgrims going to Jerusalem to keep the Passover, and falling in with Christ by the way, notwithstanding His endeavour to avoid them; then, after the teaching and the feeding, the multitude desire to take Him to Jerusalem and crown Him king; with this project the disciples would be in full sympathy; but Jesus constrains them to depart in a ship, sends away the people, and retires to pray on the mountain-side. This brings us to our text, and we deal with it by considering the lessons it illustrates, thus—(1) The path of duty is sometimes beset with difficulties and dangers; (2) Jesus progressively tries, and thus strengthens the faith of His followers (they had been in a storm when He commanded them to put to sea before, but He was with them then; now they must trust in the care of an absent Saviour); (3) Jesus is not really unmindful of the trouble of His people, even when He appears to be so (He saw them toiling in rowing); (4) In His own time and way He will surely appear for the deliverance of those who trust in Him; (5) It shows sad thoughtlessness to be overwhelmed with astonishment when He delivers us.

Sometimes a marvellous statement made in the

text may be justified by several considerations, each of which becomes a leading division; thus, in teaching our gain notwithstanding Adam's fall (Rom. v. 17), the "much more" of our text may be thus justified—(1) Adam's sin has given occasion for a wonderful display of the mercy and love of God; (2) By reason of the fall, the race has been put under a more favourable probation; (3) Christ's righteousness accepted, brings us into more endearing relationship to God; (4) Our future glory hereby acquires a richer interest.

Sometimes exposition and inference may be profitably united in the divisions. Thus on the Sabbath, Mark ii. 27, 28—(1) The Sabbath is God's institution, intended to meet man's need; (2) Therefore it is of perpetual obligation; (3) Therefore Christ, the divine Son of Man, Himself God and man, is Lord of the Sabbath; (4) Therefore the Sabbath should be so observed that God may be glorified, man refreshed, and Christ's glory duly acknowledged. Or the subject may be used to suggest a query which then becomes a principal division; as in the above the fourth head might be stated thus, How then should the Christian Sabbath be kept? Again, taking as text 1 Tim. ii. 4, we observe—(1) All men need to be saved; (2) God wills that all men should be saved, and

has made all necessary provision for this; (3) Why then are not all men saved?

The more briefly the divisions can be stated the better, provided of course that they are adequately stated. Thus we might consider the Power that worketh in us (Eph. iii. 20) under four heads—(1) What it is; (2) How it works in us; (3) What it has done; (4) What it can and will do. Or, taking Christ on the great day of the feast inviting the thirsty to come to Him and drink (John vii. 37-39), we have—(1) Thirst; (2) Supply; (3) Overflow.

Sometimes alliteration lends her artful aid to memory. On the occasion of a chapel anniversary one might preach from, "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house," and draw out the profitable employments of public worship under the heads collected from the four opening verses of Ps. lxxv. Thus—(1) Praise; (2) Performance of vows; (3) Public prayer; (4) Penitence for prevalent iniquity; (5) Pardon and purification; (6) Pleasant privileges; (7) Plenty. The parable of the Prodigal Son might similarly be treated under the four heads—Ruin, Repentance, Return, Reception; and "A good soldier of Jesus Christ" might be described under the heads—his Captain, Character, Conflict, Crown.

Comparison and contrast may sometimes lead on

to the practical lessons to be gleaned from a subject. The Pharisee and the publican in the temple (Luke xviii. 9-14) may be thus treated, showing, first, in what respects they were alike; next, how they differed; and, lastly, what lessons we may gather from the parable. Thus the sin and repentance of Judas and of Peter might be compared and contrasted as illustrating 2 Cor. ii. 10; and so with the wise and the foolish virgins.

These instances sufficiently show that *variety is the natural method*, and that the same text may admit of various modes of treatment, according to the taste of the preacher, his aim, the occasion, or the congregation he addresses. But in every case *the plan should preserve the unity of the subject, presenting the various parts of it in a natural and progressive order*; enabling the preacher, first, to grasp the subject with logical definiteness, and then present it clearly to the minds of his hearers.

THE APPLICATION requires careful thought and preparation. The usual method of reserving this for the conclusion, though often the most natural, should not be slavishly followed. If your hearers always know when to expect the application they are, in a sense, forearmed against it; besides, at the end of a sermon the congregation is often more anxious for you to have done than to gain any further good from a prolongation of the discourse.

In dealing with quiet, thoughtful people, who come on purpose to be edified, and have a relish for the Word, a brief concluding improvement of the teachings of the text will be appropriate and profitable; but in dealing with the ungodly, the reverse is often the case. Just as if you announce beforehand that you intend to preach a temperance sermon, those who most need it will often take notice to stay away; so if sinners know that at the end a special appeal will be made to them, they will be prepared to resist it. It is far more effective to apply here and there as you go on, drawing the bow at a venture when an arrow comes into your hand. Many subjects may be handled so as to keep the conscience awake all through; and if the arrangement is natural, the interest should deepen towards the end, so that a final appeal may lead to present decision for Christ.

COLLECTING MATERIALS.

In dealing with the preacher's self-education we showed that by constant observation of nature and of men, and the study of the Word, he should be always gathering materials for the pulpit. An educated man has been neatly defined as one who knows everything about something, and something about everything. This is the kind of education

which is useful to a preacher. It is astonishing what various kinds of knowledge are useful in sermon preparation. The true preacher is always in his study; he is always gleaning for the pulpit; and the mind thus kept receptive and active is in a good condition for the hard thinking required in direct sermonising.

All this by the way. But we suppose the text is now selected, and a sermon to be prepared. Materials in great abundance and variety will be wanted; whence shall they be obtained? First, see how much you have in stock. Your mind has been laid hold of by the text with a view to some definite teaching, so that you already have a general idea of the sermon. "How many loaves have ye? go and see." After carefully reading all of the context which throws any light on your text, and turning up and studying parallel passages, jot down the ideas which suggest themselves from mind or memory, and the illustrations and inferences that occur to you, taking a separate line for each, and couching it in the fewest possible words. Divide your subject into its main parts, and roughly arrange what thoughts you have, before seeking materials elsewhere. This will secure a certain amount of originality.

Next, under a spell of thought-hunger, go forth to forage where you may. Probably your subject

has a historical side, and you require accurate information from sacred or profane history. This gained will set you thinking afresh, and thus add to your store. Commentaries may suggest additional teachings, conversation may help you, though this should be done so that your friends have no idea of your purpose; and from first to last, your own mind will seethe the subject day and night when nothing else requires attention. If from time to time the matter thus gained be jotted down or stored up, you will presently find enough for your sermon.

But in addition to solid material, you need illustrations of all kinds: anecdotes, similes from nature, symbols, poetry, proverbs, and scriptural and historical incidents; both to elucidate the meaning and enforce the lessons of your text. These may be culled partly from books, but chiefly from your own observations and experience.

It will be well to illustrate this part of the work rather fully. We will, therefore, take a text which embodies a topic in an illustrative manner, and trace the method of collecting and arranging the materials for a sermon.

We will suppose you have chosen the words of Obadiah in 1 Kings xviii. 12, "I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth." Your design is to prepare such a sermon on "Early Piety" as may

induce young people to seek the Lord without delay. Your subject and your purpose should be kept in mind while searching for materials, so that the sermon may all tend in the desired direction.

First, you endeavour to ascertain the facts of the case. You find that this is the only chapter in which Obadiah is mentioned; and this suggests that he might never have been known to us at all if he had not met Elijah. Yet what a loss it would have been to us if this example of early and eminent piety had not been placed on record. This leads you to reflect that probably many a man as good as he may have lived who never happened to meet any prophet; and thus no notice of him has been preserved on earth, but his record is on high. Again, you note that he was steward of Ahab's house, and apparently next the king; hence you infer that while Ahab hated the worship of Jehovah, he loved the uprightness and sterling character begotten of it in Obadiah; so that he preferred him before all his idolatrous courtiers; and this reminds you that Voltaire would not allow atheism to be spoken of in presence of his servants, because he did not want to be murdered; and the reflection follows that the gold coinage of righteousness issued from heaven's bank finds its value even in the idolater's and the infidel's

market; like the English sovereign, welcome everywhere. Again, you think what a dreadful place Ahab's court must have been for Obadiah. Still he not only lived there, but maintained his piety, and acted up to his convictions in saving a hundred of the Lord's prophets when Jezebel sought their destruction. This reminds you that "grace can live where neither you nor I would choose to live"; and you remember that in the dark days of Malachi there were some who feared the Lord, and thought on His name; that Joseph in the Egyptian prison and Daniel in the court of Babylon were conspicuous for their fidelity to God and man; and that enshrined among the worthies of the New Testament were some saints in the household of Cæsar Nero. Then, considering the moral and material condition of Israel at the time, you see Obadiah faithful among the faithless, standing forth a son of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; his early piety had developed into eminent piety.

But again, turning to your text you observe that true religion is spoken of as "fearing the Lord." This suggests that our feelings towards God are determined by the views we have of Him. Obadiah in his youth had been told of the greatness of God and His terrible acts until he stood in awe of Him, and feared to sin; yet he could not

but trust in Him as the God of Israel, and with a loyal heart he loved to obey. Then you think that the more tender views of God furnished in and by Christ, if inculcated in the young mind, should surely lead to a happier form of early piety than Obadiah possessed. In his full age you note that Obadiah feared the Lord greatly, which shows how religion grows in the heart and life and character. God was more to him in manhood than He had been in his youth ; but this was because in youth his nature had been laid fully open to divine influences. But you consider how it might have been with him if he had not begun to fear the Lord early ; that he might not have begun at all, for the spirit of that age was very idolatrous. Yet if he had not been a good man, it is likely with his strength of character he might have been very bad, and even have joined with Ahab and Jezebel in rooting out the prophets of God from the land. Early decision was his salvation.

Then leaving Obadiah for the nonce, you think of early piety as a right feeling and state of heart towards God beginning in early life, and you inquire what is the feeling which young people should have towards Him. Certainly "the fear of the Lord is" still "the beginning of wisdom"; but under the gospel this fear is graciously sweetened into love and filial trust. Now

childhood is peculiarly susceptible to these feelings, so that it is easier to lead a child to Christ than an adult. But if the child accepts Christ he grows up in fellowship with Him, and a naturally developed, all-round, vigorous piety is the result. Finally, you reflect that if one is not converted young, he is either preparing a bitter repentance for himself in later life, or is starting on a career which will end in final ruin.

Next, turning to that prince of commentators, Matthew Henry, you find that although many of his thoughts have already occurred to your own mind, there are a few more you can utilise. "Those who are good betimes are likely to be very good; he that would thrive must rise at five." Again, that Obadiah's position added lustre to his piety, and gave him the better opportunity to protect the Lord's prophets.

Lastly, you consider that this subject is one which admits of various forms of illustration, and that it is important to pay particular attention to this in order to gain the attention of the young and fix the truth in their minds. You inquire what instances of early piety are furnished in Scripture, and you note particularly Samuel, Josiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and his companions. What illustrations will nature afford? The exuberant fulness and freshness of all young life, the beauty of the tree

well-trained from the first, the early-grafted tree in contrast with one cut off and grafted at full age.

The materials you have now collected will suggest more when you proceed to arrange them in order, and will thus probably prove sufficient for your purpose. We have gone through the process in detail for the purpose of making our meaning clear; but in actual work you would merely jot down each thought in a separate line, and indicate an illustration by a single bracket thus [. The result of your meditations at this stage would then appear something after this fashion [the numbers being added for reference later on]—

OBADIAH: EARLY PIETY.

“I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth”
(1 Kings xviii. 12).

1. This is the only chapter in which Obadiah is mentioned.

2. Many as good as he may have lived and died with no earthly record; as he might have done if he had not met Elijah.

3. It would have been a pity if so good an instance of early and eminent piety in an idolatrous age had been lost to us.

4. He was steward to an idolatrous king, who

loved his honesty though he hated his religion.
[Voltaire, [the sovereign.

5. But what a place for a good man to occupy !
"Grace can live where neither you nor I would
choose to live," [Joseph in prison, [Daniel, [Saints
in the days of Malachi, and in [Cæsar's house-
hold.

6. Yet he did not conceal his religion, but
acted up to his convictions in saving the Lord's
prophets.

7. Thus he stands forth in a dark age faithful
among the faithless, fearing the Lord greatly,
because he had feared Him from his youth.

8. "Fearing the Lord" is a characteristic Old
Testament description of religion.

9. The more tender views of God given in the
New Testament should similarly lead to faith and
love.

10. The principles of religion early implanted
grow : God is more to the man than to the youth
or the child.

11. If he had not begun early, he might not
have begun to fear the Lord at all.

12. If he had not been good, he might, with
his strong character, have been very bad, and
have done a great deal of mischief.

13. Early piety means a right feeling and con-
duct towards God, beginning in early life.

14. This in our day, though beginning with fear, should develop quickly into trust and love.

15. In youth, the heart is peculiarly susceptible.

16. What begins in youth grows up with us as second nature: [trees early trained or early grafted.

17. The want of early piety incurs either bitter repentance later on, or final ruin.

18. Those good betimes are likely to become very good: [Samuel, [Josiah, [Jeremiah, [Daniel and his companions.

19. Position adds lustre to eminent piety, and opportunity for usefulness.

20. Early piety should be, like all young life, full of joyfulness, freshness, and strength.

To regard this as an outline of a sermon would be like mistaking a mob for an army, or a heap of building materials for a house. In the next section we shall show how these thoughts may be built up into a sermon.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF THOUGHTS.

Many an old farmhouse is quite an architectural curiosity. There is an enormous chimney around which the other parts of the house are grouped. At the back the long roof nearly reaches the ground. Within, owing to want of proper arrangement, space is wasted, and rooms

inconveniently connected. In its construction a liberal use has been made of hard-burnt brick and solid heart of oak; but a much more commodious house might have been erected at the same cost if only a good plan had first been prepared. It is so with some sermons: the materials are good and plentiful, but so loosely strung together as to lose half their force. Such sermons furnish a new illustration of the proverb: "Much food is in the tillage of the poor, but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment."

The making of logical divisions avails little, unless care be taken to arrange the various thoughts in order under their several heads. The proper order is that which enables each thought to assist in elucidating the subject, in unfolding or enforcing the argument, or in strengthening the appeal. Every fresh thought should add something relevant; there should be no falling back, no halting, but a steady marching forward till the whole subject reaches a climax.

Hence it is a mistake to attempt to say all that can be said on your subject. The subject should be used only so far as it will serve your purpose. A dozen side lines of thought may branch off from it; but to follow them would be to lose your first aim. Several illustrations of the same point may occur to you; but to use them all would be to

overload your discourse, and make the illustrations more prominent than the point illustrated. A variety of grounds of appeal arise, but to dwell on them all would so lengthen the sermon and weary the audience that the whole purpose of the appeal would be frustrated. Many of your hearers are soon wearied, and if you give them too much they will carry the less away. Let them go long-
ing rather than loathing; and what remains over from one occasion may serve for another.

We concluded the last section with jottings of twenty thoughts bearing more or less on early piety as exemplified in the account we have of Obadiah. It would puzzle a preacher and perplex his hearers if he committed them to memory, and preached from them in the order in which we left them. Still these contain the substance of a sermon, or will easily suggest what more may be needed; and when arranged in proper order, can be very easily remembered. To illustrate the method of classifying thoughts, we will, therefore, refer to these, and proceed to build them up into a sermon, to which we will give the title—

THE NATURE AND ADVANTAGES OF EARLY PIETY.

Our aim shall be to set forth the nature of early piety, and to exhibit its advantages, so that children may be induced to seek it, and parents

and teachers may know what to aim at and expect as the fruit of their efforts and prayers.

Our text, 1 Kings xviii. 12, latter part, "I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth," gives a good opportunity for introducing the topic, because in Obadiah we have a fine example of what we wish to recommend. As we propose to treat the subject topically, we have a natural division in our title, namely—(1) The Nature of Early Piety. (2) Its Advantages. This is the natural order, for any tradesman will exhibit his goods before enlarging on their excellences.

Now you should carefully consider each of the twenty thoughts, marking those which should form the introduction with a — and placing a 1 or a 2 against each of the others, or a 3, if any of them belongs to the conclusion. Thus you have the first three thoughts for introduction; 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 20 for the first head, and no less than eleven left to the second; but you observe that several of these are mere illustrations, or will work in together.

The three will about suffice for introduction, but the six will require considerable expansion or addition to give the importance to the first part which is its due; while, owing to abundance of material, it may be necessary to condense or omit from the second part.

In attempting to expand for the first part, you notice that the six thoughts arouse, rather than satisfy, the mind. It occurs to you that you ought to show what piety is, then that it may be acquired early, and that there is nothing unnatural in such acquisition; that everything in nature has its juvenile beginning, and why should not piety?

Next, as you meditate on its advantages, as suggested in the thoughts, you notice that some are of a *negative* kind, namely, 11, 12, 17, while those remaining specify its *positive* benefits. You conclude that as the negative are the less striking, you will place them before the positive. But these negative advantages are of two kinds, having to do respectively with *ourselves* and our *neighbours*; and upon the ground that mercy may pardon the harm one does himself—but even that will not undo the harm he has done his neighbour—you conclude to place that which concerns oneself first as being the less important.

But the positive advantages also require a principle of arrangement. They concern *experience*, *character*, and *practice*. As character is the outgrowth of experience, and practice is the product of experience and character, you conclude that this principle should rule in your arrangement.

You now proceed to write out an outline in accord with these preliminary considerations thus—

THE NATURE AND ADVANTAGES OF EARLY PIETY.

“I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth” (1 Kings xviii. 12).

This is the only chapter in which Obadiah is mentioned. Many as good as he have doubtless lived and died without earthly record, as he might have done had he not met Elijah. “Full many a flower is born to blush unseen.” We have reason to be thankful that this instance of early and eminent piety in an idolatrous age has been preserved for our instruction.

1. EARLY PIETY—ITS NATURE.

Piety is a right state of heart and life Godward.

Its first state is that of a reverential fear. So young Obadiah had been taught that God was great and holy till he stood in awe of Him, and feared to offend Him; but he was also instructed concerning His wonderful dealings with Israel, till he learned to trust and delight in Him. This is what the Old Testament calls the “fear of the Lord.”

These sterner aspects of the Divine nature are now supplemented by the more tender revelation of God in Christ; so that from the fear of the penitent, or the servant, may follow the trust of the believer, and the love which marks the child of God.

Now as the youthful heart is peculiarly sensitive to fear, trust, and love, *this right state of heart*

and life Godward should properly begin, as it does towards parents, in early life.

Just as a child only enjoys life as he believes in and responds to parental love, and the best children are the happiest, so the knowledge and love of God complete the equipment of the child's life for true happiness.

Piety will not spoil a child or make him old. God's young things, trees, plants, lambs, birds, etc., are full of energy and brightness, and so are His children; they are full of life and fun; enjoy their play, and stick to their work at school, all the more heartily, because they are happy in the love of God. God is to them the glory of their brightest days, and the comfort of their nights.

[Hence appeal to the young.] You were baptized into the Christian Church; you have been taught like young Obadiah about God, and more than he, for you know about Jesus and His love. You do not wait to grow older to love father and mother, or to obey them. Why not accept Christ now, to trust in Him and love Him? He loves you now, and waits for your love. *Let the sunshine into your heart and life now.*

2. EARLY PIETY—ITS ADVANTAGES.

It prevents much sin which would either occasion bitter repentance in later life or end in eternal ruin. Many, if not saved young, will not be saved at all.

It prevents the harm we should otherwise do to others, and which we could never undo. The stronger the character, the more dangerous the sinner. Obadiah unsaved might have helped

Jezebel to destroy the prophets. Paul did fearful mischief before he was converted.

It gives opportunity for the most natural growth in Christian experience. The mind is expanded in the light of divine knowledge, and the affections in the warmth of divine love. Thus we grow up in Christ naturally, and the life of Christ within us is as natural as our bodily life: [like the tree early grafted which scarcely shows the graft. [Contrast sinner converted at fifty like an old tree cut off and grafted. Those good betimes are likely to become very good. Obadiah, who feared the Lord from his youth, feared Him greatly.

It secures strength of character and consistency of life. Obadiah is a fine instance of this. Everything seemed against him. The days were evil. He lived in an idolatrous court. The king and queen hated his religion. Yet such was his integrity that Ahab preferred him before all his courtiers, and though himself a worshipper of Baal felt his affairs were safest in the hands of a servant of Jehovah: [Voltaire, [the English sovereign. So true worth is respected everywhere. [It was so with Joseph in Egypt, and Daniel in Babylon, who also feared the Lord from their youth. Such grace can live where neither you nor I would choose to live.

It affords full scope for a life of usefulness. In youth we have opportunities for cultivating our abilities so as to make them tell in after life; we have life before us, and can prepare for our work so as to make the best of our talents and opportunities. If, like Obadiah, we occupy a high

position, we may be the more useful; but the Master's "Well done" will be awarded to every faithful servant.

[Appeal.] On all these grounds, then, *we urge you to seek the Lord early*; to seek Him now. You see many men and women who are shortening their lives by sin; they are hurting others as well as themselves. You hope to do better when you grow up; then begin now. If these people had feared the Lord betimes, they would have been saved from all this. You want to be happy and good and useful, then now is your chance; a good day's work should be begun in the morning. Jesus loves you now, and wants to make your life as bright and blessed as possible. Give Him your heart now.

Let your earnest prayer be, "O satisfy us *early* with Thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

Upon surveying this outline, and comparing it with the twenty thoughts, you will see that though great liberties have been taken with them, they are almost all used in some form. You will observe, too, that the thoughts added naturally arise as you proceed, and that ultimately the arrangement is such, that by the time the outline is completed, it is well-nigh fixed in the memory.

FILLING IN THE OUTLINE.

The filling in should not be commenced till the

outline is as good as you can make it. A beginner should go critically over his work to see whether all is in due proportion, each point fairly presented, and every thought in place. This may perhaps result in the writing (if time allows) of a second outline containing the same thoughts expressed more clearly, arranged more logically, and with sundry others added. This, again, is to be judged, and if not satisfactory, it should be superseded by a third, or even by a fourth.

The filling in may be done either on paper or in the pulpit. Both methods should be tried. Writing tends to exactness in expression and composition; it enlarges the vocabulary and gives occasion for weighing your thoughts, so that mere feelings and words may not carry you away. On the other hand, extemporaneous preaching promotes freedom and force of utterance, and should be cultivated from the outset.

Each leading thought will generally develop into a paragraph, but sometimes two or more will coalesce into one paragraph, and occasionally one will branch into two. Let the paragraphs be long or short, as the case requires; and when you have done with a thought leave it; to overdo it is to undo it. A clear statement of an undisputed point is sufficient. Do not weary yourself and your audience by attempting to convince them of what

they already acknowledge. Be very cautious in dealing with disputed topics, or you may suggest more difficulties than you clear up. Never accept and restate an argument from a book unless you are sure you understand it, and are satisfied that it is sound.

Treat each part of your subject according to its relative importance. This will sometimes necessitate the making of one division much longer than the others, but that is immaterial. Keep your main purpose in view, and work for it. In stating doctrine, carefully observe the Scripture standard; and in quoting Scripture give the exact words. In arguing a case, see your own way through before attempting to lead others. In making appeals, be tender and not tedious. In expounding Scripture, be solicitous to give its real meaning, and not your ideas of what the passage ought to mean.

Thoroughly master each point. This is the secret of good composition. A thought clearly apprehended shapes itself in words. Think your thought aloud, and you have already expressed it. We do not mean that the first words are always the best. In hasty writing, tautologies¹

¹ *Tautology*, saying the same thing in different words, as in the common misquotation of the benediction, "The fellowship and communion of the Holy Ghost."

and needless repetitions often occur which require correction ; but clearness is the first aim, and when that is secured, the graces of speech will easily follow.

If each thought is thus allowed to suggest its own words, it will save you from seeking finery of language. There is nothing more contemptible than this habit. Affectation of style and imitation of favourite authors is fatal to true manliness and originality. If those imitated had done the same, they would never have been thought worthy of imitation. To some the use of choice language is as natural as the flowers of spring or the glory of the peacock. But for others to ape them is to illustrate afresh the fable of the jackdaw dressed up in the peacock's cast-off plumage. If your thoughts choose their own words they will exhibit themselves, and instead of attracting attention to their dress they will carry weight according to their intrinsic worth ; whereas any attention drawn to beauty of language is taken away from the subject in hand.

In conversation we naturally adapt our language to the capacities of those we address. In relating an incident to a child, we use greater simplicity than in telling it to an adult. The same rule should be observed in pulpit utterances. We must not forget that those we address are the

same in the sanctuary as they are out of it; any word they would not understand outside, they will not understand inside. Yet how often this is forgotten, and the preacher uses in the pulpit words he would not address to the same persons in private. Sometimes this may arise from a wish to maintain the "dignity of the pulpit." But surely this is best consulted by simplicity and godly sincerity. Spurgeon's published sermons perhaps furnish the best specimens of the language and composition suited to win the ear and touch the heart of the common people. The plain Saxon speech of these sermons has gone far to make them household treasures in thousands of cottage homes.

But while clearness and simplicity are cultivated, they must not be suffered to degenerate into cant, rant, or vulgar colloquialisms. The pulpit in its simplicity and purity of speech should be a public educator, using the common speech of the multitude to express the highest thoughts and to rouse the noblest emotions. But poverty of language is no virtue. Many long words are as well understood and as commonly used as their shorter equivalents, though greater strength generally lies in the briefer words and sentences. One is apt to lose one's way in traversing a long sentence, and a thought attired in too

wordy a garment is seriously hampered if not suffocated.

A consciousness of the intense reality of the truths to be uttered is the best aid to sermon composition. We are witnesses for Christ, and must deliver our testimony concerning Him; we are watchmen on the walls of Zion, and must sound the trumpet and give the alarm in no uncertain way; we are teachers, and must set forth the truth so that all may understand; we are pastors, and must feed the people with knowledge and wisdom. Let us be true to our work, and we shall not attempt to elaborate poems or indulge in magnificent flights of fancy; but like the apostle, by manifestation of the truth, we shall commend ourselves and our message to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

It may seem to some who have accustomed themselves to a less laborious method, that the plan we have advised is cumbersome and tedious. It appears so on paper, because we have gone through it in detail with a fulness of illustration suited for those who have had little experience. But in practice we doubt if any method less laborious will yield results equally good. It has the advantage, too, of being equally suited to those who have the scantiest and those who

have the most abundant opportunities and aids to sermonising.

As we have already stated, the preacher's self-culture stands more in the formation of correct habits than in the mere acquisition of knowledge. Of all habits the most important is that of clear, correct, consecutive thinking. This is promoted in a high degree by the method of preparation we have recommended; and as the habit grows, subjects will be thought out in order from the beginning, and often the first written outline will prove satisfactory.

A preacher must not be impatient of results, or expect to become master of his work in a month. Some years of steady, watchful, self-discipline should make his profiting appear to all; but if after that he allows himself to rest on his supposed matured ability, his sun will go down while it is yet day. Nothing but constant growth, both in grace and knowledge, can keep a man a living preacher.

Sermons are not always prepared in the way we have described. Sometimes a sermon comes as if by inspiration; but this is not usual, and cannot be relied upon for ordinary occasions, though now and then it has justified itself as though it came from above. Some preachers select a text, get a few thoughts on it, and then

preach from it. They have no idea of the injustice they do themselves and their congregations by this careless habit, neither do they imagine what a wonderful sameness there is in their sermons though preached from different texts. The fact is, they preach *from* their text, and generally arrive at the same place pretty soon, whatever be their starting-point. This way of preparing is too superficial. More thought, more prayer, the collecting and arrangement of the thoughts on paper, combined with a search everywhere for further information, would bring them to the system we have explained, and would marvellously increase their acceptableness and usefulness.

But when one has long and patiently practised this method, he will become so accustomed to orderly thinking as to be able occasionally to dispense with writing. Yet we do not recommend this as a general rule; for, as Bacon says, "writing maketh an exact man." As soon as you commence to write, you begin to verify your facts, and to state them correctly; whereas, without writing, one is content to state things in a more general way.

We have purposely refrained from presenting our readers with a number of outlines, partly because there is no need, for they can be pur-

chased to any extent; and partly because we do not believe in their use, except to furnish or provoke thought. If it is not plagiarism to take another man's skeleton, and having dressed it up to pass it off for your own, it is at least a most humiliating proceeding. The value of a sermon depends upon its life; but it is difficult to impart this to a ready-made skeleton. A sermon should grow in the mind of the preacher and be instinct with his life. It has been our aim to start the student on such lines that he should have little difficulty in elaborating his own divisions and arranging his own thoughts.

But before preaching a sermon it should be carefully judged. Is it worth preaching? Is it suited to the congregation? Does it contain true, clear guidance for the inquirer, or real food for the flock? Or is it clear in its tones of warning? Never preach a Christless sermon. Never preach for the sake of preaching. Always have a worthy aim, and labour to attain it.

Always have a book on hand worth reading—one which requires labour to master it, and is worth the mastering. Minds are so varied that what is easy to one is quite beyond another; so every one must choose for himself. But no one should be content to read only what costs him no effort. To the extemporaneous speaker this

is the more important that his mind and language may be kept fresh and growing.

MEMORIZING.

Minds and memories differ so much that it is impossible to lay down a law of universal application; but we are persuaded that for most preachers, memoriter preaching is either an impossibility or a blunder. There are a few who when they have written a sermon, and read it a few times, can deliver it without difficulty almost word for word; and such, if they can secure time for the writing, will probably think this the most satisfactory mode of preparation. But if those not so gifted attempt to do the same, they will be hopelessly burdened in committing to memory, and fearfully in bondage in the delivery.

The memorising of which we now treat is such as will enable the preacher to dispense with the use of notes in the pulpit, and it consists more in the form of the outline and a firm grasp of the thoughts than in any special exercise of the memory. It is an exercise of the head and heart conjoined, a bringing of oneself into full sympathy with the subject.

At the risk of becoming wearisome, we must again refer to our outline. When the mind has collected and arranged the thoughts, there is little

left for the memory to do. Still that little may be made easier by condensing the long outline, so as to present the leading thoughts in order, but in the briefest form possible, thus—

OBADIAH: EARLY PIETY.

Only mention of Obadiah.

1. EARLY PIETY—ITS NATURE.

Religion begins in the fear of God, and proceeds to faith and love. Peculiarly suited to the young, who in consequence will better enjoy life and respond to their obligations. [Appeal.]

2. ITS ADVANTAGES.

It saves from sin. Prevents the mischief we might do to others. Gives opportunity for full development of Christian experience. Secures strength and consistency of character. Gives scope for a life of usefulness.

[Appeal.] God loves you now, and longs to make your life blessed all through.

Thus condensed its memorising becomes more a matter of thought and reason than a test of memory. The sum of the whole matter is this—

Piety may most appropriately begin in early life, for then it saves from sin, and prevents the doing of evil to others; it also affords full opportunity for growth in Christian experience and character, and a long life of usefulness.

When you have thus reduced and condensed

your own outline, it will mean much more to you than the words express ; and when you have gone over every point suggested in the shorter form in the light of the longer outline, you should have no difficulty in referring mentally to any part at will ; for when the main thoughts are grasped in their relation to the whole, each subordinate thought naturally follows under the banner of its leader.

But the mere ability to reel off the outline like a lesson will not suffice. The thoughts must be living in your mind, and so entirely at your service, that you can use, omit, or amend them as you preach ; your heart, too, must be in full sympathy with the subject, so that the nobler faculties may be in full activity in the delivery. In connection with this heart-preparation, the practice of going through the outline on your knees, talking it over with God, and seeking help on each point, is wonderfully helpful, enabling you to test your work in the light of the Divine Presence, and thus to assure yourself that it will bear the scrutiny of man.

If these suggestions are patiently followed, there should be no need to take notes into the pulpit. The notes are in the mind and in the heart ; the word of the Lord is in the preacher, and it will flow forth. If at first, as a kind of guarantee against failure, a few notes be used, they should be as brief as possible, and very plainly written ;

but they should not be referred to without absolute need. In this way you may quickly acquire sufficient confidence to dispense with them altogether.

If a discourse be fully written, we do not advise attempting to commit the *words* to memory. The writing has been done as an exercise in composition, and when done should be used only to assist in more clearly grasping the thoughts. If in writing you have improved upon the original outline, prepare a new skeleton from the written sermon, and get that into the mind and heart as we have advised.

PREACHING OLD SERMONS.

Ministries differ ; but to most preachers opportunity is afforded for the repetition of sermons, not only to various congregations within a few months of their composition, but again after the lapse of years.

The first of these opportunities is golden. Most preachers feel a little uncertain about a sermon till it has passed the ordeal of its first delivery. Many sermons acquit themselves so poorly on that occasion that they are left, under the law of the "survival of the fittest," among those which survive not. But such as enjoy a happier fate are generally found capable of considerable improvement, amounting sometimes to entire reconstruction. The second delivery should,

therefore, mark a great advance upon the first, not only on this account, but because the preacher feels so much more sure of his ground.

This improvement and repetition may be continued *as long as the sermon is fresh and interesting to the preacher* ; but as soon as it becomes *a mere repetition* he must lay it aside, at least for awhile. If he has no fire, he cannot kindle it in the congregation ; and if he is not interested in the sermon, he cannot interest others.

Candid friends sometimes wax eloquent on the duty of burning old sermons. It is easy to sacrifice other people's children ; some, like Brutus, can sacrifice their own in the interest of public justice ; but such virtue is rare. Yet we venture to doubt the wisdom of sermon-burning. When they die, let them die ; to parade a dead sermon in public is a sin against preacher and people ; but it is cruel to burn a living sermon. Herein appears the immense advantage possessed by the preacher who prepares as we have suggested. At any time an outline can be easily recast and brought up to present attainments. A sermon thus reconstructed contains things new and old, and is the ripest and best the preacher can command. Even when reconstruction is not required, the filling up will always accord with the growth of his intellect and enlargement of his

vocabulary, while new illustrations will gradually supersede those originally used. Thus sermons live and grow, renewing their youth, and increasing in strength. But the reader or memoriter preacher soon outgrows his juvenile productions, and must either discard them, or subject himself to the indignity of appearing in public in mental habiliments unsuited to his years.

The revision of old sermons, however, should never supersede the making of new ones. Time should be allowed to bear away all but the most useful; for the active mind will discover themes possessing new interest, victories demanding new songs, and experiences which must be set in new forms. When a preacher ceases to make new sermons, his glory has departed. He may select again and again from the fruits of his better days; but when no fresh matter is added, both he and his people will feel how old and stale they are, and the work of preaching will become mechanical and joyless. The preacher will die, unless some of his sermons die to make room for better and riper productions.

A PREACHER'S NOTE-BOOKS.

For the proper garnering of your harvests, and carrying on of your operations in homiletic husbandry, several note-books are required.

1. The *Text-Book*. This need be no larger than a penny memorandum-book, as it is not intended to be permanent; but the pages should be of the ordinary notepaper size. Leave the first page blank for index. Commencing with the second page, write at its head any text which comes home to you as one on which you must preach, and add the special view of it which occurred at the moment it struck you, or a reference to the book and page whence the text leaped out upon you; so that at any time you can go back into the same relation to it as you stood in at the first introduction. Leave the remainder of the second and third pages to be filled in with further thoughts on this text as you meet with them, and place the next text in the same way on the fourth page. You should not too readily enter texts in this book; make sure first that they really strike you in a way that promises a useful sermon. Look at each carefully, and see that the new texts are not too nearly akin to some that you have already in stock. Having these selected texts in the book keep them in mind, and be ever on the watch for fresh information or illustrations, and jot these down in the fewest possible words under the text. In this way much useful material may be accumulated in readiness for the building of a sermon.

2. The *Sermon Note-Book*. The very common

practice of writing sermon notes on odd bits of paper is not to be recommended. Until a preacher is a master of his art, he had better make his first outline of a sermon on a loose sheet, because it is not intended to be kept; but when he makes what will be, for the present, his finished outline, it is better to write it neatly in a book, not smaller than notepaper size, and not too thick for the pocket, containing, say, thirty-two or forty-eight leaves. If when you have entered an outline in this book it is superseded by another, you can run the pen down the page and add a reference to the book in which the new outline may be found. Such a system keeps the notes in much better order than odd sheets, and you can use the first page for an index. This book is intended for use only in preparing for the pulpit.

3. *The Pulpit Note-Book.* If you cannot gain the confidence required for preaching comfortably without notes, it is better to use a book than to have the notes on a slip, which may be easily lost or mislaid, and which in time of need may have fallen into the pulpit or aisle, or have been shut inadvertently into another part of the Bible. These notes should be prepared expressly for pulpit use; and should not occupy more than one opening in the book; so that no turning of leaves is required. The book should have a neat black

cover, and be bound so as when open to lie flat in the Bible. It should not have more than about thirty-two leaves. The notes should be written very plainly, the main divisions being set forth distinctly in the very form of the outline, and the principal subdivisions and illustrations suggested by appropriate leading words, rather than stated fully. It is to be used only as a crutch till you can do without it; but if that consummation is never attained, you may accustom yourself to look at your notes as little as possible, and have them by you, rather to give confidence by steadying the nerves than as essential for use.

Some recommend a commonplace book for jotting down and indexing any thought or incident which strikes them, and others laboriously proceed with the preparation of an index to their library, so as to make it into a vast indexed encyclopedia. The labour thus entailed is immense and continuous, for one's library is never complete. It suits some classes of minds, but entails a vast amount of work which is never turned to account. Most content themselves with the simple method of marking a book in the margin, or turning down important pages, remembering the general drift of the books they read sufficiently to guide them in their search for sermon matter as they require it.

The Preacher in the Pulpit.

"Thy testimonies are very sure : holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever."—PS. xciii. 5.

"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God. . . . Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God."—ECCLES v. 1, 2.

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow."—ST. MATT. xiii. 3.

"Preach the word ; be instant in season, out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."—2 TIM. iv. 2.

"So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."—NEH. viii. 8.

"I delight to do Thy will, O my God : yea, Thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation : lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, Thou knowest. I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart ; I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation : I have not concealed Thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation."—PS. xl. 8-10.

"The country parson preacheth constantly ; the pulpit is his joy and his throne. . . . As soon as he awakes on Sunday morning he presently falls to work, and seems to himself so as a market-man is when the market-day comes, or a shopkeeper when customers come in. His thoughts are full of making the best of the day, and contriving it to his best gains."—GEORGE HERBERT.

"Preach the word. Feed the flock. Win souls. An ordinary man may become extraordinary when the Spirit of the Almighty Son of God dwelleth in him. . . . Keep eternity in view. Let the light of the 'great white throne' fall on your page when you study, and on your pulpit when you preach."—CUYLER.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PREACHER IN THE PULPIT.

THE pulpit is the preacher's throne, and he is unworthy to occupy it who does not realise its dignity and responsibility. Said an aged and not unkind critic to a young man who had entered the pulpit with an air of boldness, and left it crest-fallen and dejected: "Young man, if you had gone up as you came down, you would have come down as you went up." No air of "pulpit propriety" need be assumed: realise your position, and you will be manly and modest, trustful and devout.

Always show a reverence for the Bible. Not that there is any sacredness in its paper or binding, but because you hold a peculiar relation to the truths therein contained. The merciless manner in which some preachers strike the open Bible, or turn down the leaves, is highly to be deprecated; so is the habit of closing the book as soon as the text has been read, as if you had now done with it.

The pulpit is privileged : no one dares contradict the preacher. This, instead of inducing recklessness, should make you cautious. When you consider that any statement which does not commend itself to the judgment of your hearers tends to destroy their confidence in your teaching, and that the influence of your word depends upon its carrying conviction to the conscience, you will see that the privilege of unfettered speech brings with it a tremendous responsibility. Always endeavour to speak so that no one could contradict if he might. The abuse of the preacher's privilege has led some to call the pulpit the "Coward's Castle," a name it deserves when occupied by such as say there what they would not dare repeat in private to the parties concerned. A most shameful form of this abuse is perpetrated when a preacher invited to occupy the pulpit of another denomination takes the opportunity to "make them hear the truth for once," that is, to hear his own views in opposition to the points of doctrine on which they differ from himself.

It may sometimes be your duty to controvert popular error, to proclaim truths which you know to be unpalatable to some of your hearers, or to deal with current controversy. Here the privilege of the pulpit gives a fine opportunity for stating

the well-assured facts of the case; but you should first make sure of your facts, and then state them in the least offensive way. If you have occasion to state the opposite views, you should do it so fairly that your antagonist will feel he could not have done it better himself. Perhaps he will meet you when you leave your stronghold, but you can face him with a clear conscience if you have not abused the privilege of your position.

When nervousness is overcome, and you feel at home in the pulpit, you will find, however complete your preparations have been, that fresh light and new illustrations will flash upon you. Then it is time to be cautious: "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." If you yield too fully to these fresh thoughts you may be led off your track, and be unable to get back; or the time thus expended may cramp you for what remains. But if you wholly refuse them, you may deprive your hearers of that which would have been of fresher interest than anything you had prepared. Follow the golden mean: use these inspirations with caution, and, if found profitable, add them to the outline for future use.

There is nothing more difficult to a living preacher than to keep within time limits, but it must be done. Young preachers especially must be on their guard, or in the fervour of their zeal

they will lose balance and commence exhorting when they have finished the sermon, and continue to such a length as to undo any good the sermon had done. Even some veterans would be more acceptable and useful if they knew when they had finished. The age is impatient of long sermons; and preachers will act wisely in not exceeding the time allotted to the service, and not unduly shortening the other parts of it to make room for a long sermon.

ON VOICE AND MANNER.

The battle of the nerves should, if possible, be mainly fought out at the debating club, the Mutual Improvement Class, or wherever opportunity is offered for public speaking. Those who intend to preach should plunge into debate, and speak at every opportunity, for thus they become accustomed to the sound of their voice, and acquire the power of thinking while speaking extempore. Most candidates for the pulpit will also have previously taken part in the church prayer-meeting, in prayer, exhortation, or testimony. These exercises tend largely towards lessening the nervousness which assails the preacher in his first attempts.

As a further aid, it may be wise to preach in your own room to an imaginary audience; not

reading your notes, but preaching the sermon in full. It will be better still if you can do this in the open air without any fear of being overheard. Beyond this, and the practice you may gain in addressing the Sabbath school, you can only go and *preach*, and by persistent, prayerful practice overcome nervousness, and make the people hear as well as you can. After a little you will be sufficiently calm in the pulpit to have all your wits about you. Then, with the aid of some judicious, confidential friend, you should carefully correct defects in voice or style, and guard against contracting habits which would mar your ministry.

Be master of your voice. You possess a splendid musical instrument capable of expressing all shades of emotion. Resolve to use in the Master's service, not only the tone of command or the narrative tone, but all the tones, from the lowest that can be heard by all the congregation to the loudest you ever need; from the tender tone of entreaty to the strong tone of fierce indignation; from the pleasant easy tone you use in an illustration to the clear definite tone in which you lay down a definition or lead an argument. The people must listen to your voice through the whole sermon: if it be monotonous, how hard it will be for them to remain awake; if naturally

varied, what a pleasure it will be to listen. You should not so much strive to be natural as *guard against becoming unnatural*. Be real, and let your voice express you. You wish your hearers to see what you see, and feel as you feel; be true to yourself, and let your voice really represent you. Do not suppose that uttering a word carries its meaning to another's mind. If thereby you wish to excite thought, you must make the word alive with your own thought; if emotion, you must put the emotion into the expression.

Be careful to pronounce your words correctly, and to utter every word and even every syllable distinctly. We have already advised the cultivation of grammatical correctness in conversation, and to this should be added the habit of distinct enunciation. An extemporaneous speaker who allows himself in private to use slang phrases, and to mutter or mumble his words, is never safe from doing the same in public. Avoid a pedantic mouthing of words or an affected style, but let the words flow forth with a pleasant distinctness which carries home the thought or emotion without any effort on the part of the listener.

And on this account, *avoid either a too slow or a too rapid delivery*. Any speaker will speak more rapidly at one time than at another; but you should keep within reasonable limits, and neither become

so slow that your hearers ache to hear what is coming next, nor so rapid as to bewilder them with a cataract of words which deafens the ear and baffles the understanding. So there should be a limit to the low tones that they sink not too low, or many will lose such parts of the sentences altogether; neither must the voice be lifted to such a pitch as to become distressing either for shrillness or sonorousness. *But above all, avoid the monotone.*

If you are fairly possessed by your subject it will tend to naturalness of gesture. More of action is natural to some than to others. At first you may find it difficult to dispose of your legs and arms, but presently they will dispose of themselves, and you will forget them. By that time your candid friend will tell you if you have fallen into any ungraceful attitudes. With such a safeguard, and the constantly increasing power of the truth on your heart, what at first were encumbrances will become helps in setting forth the word of life—fingers, hands, arms, and the whole person will be absorbed in the work.

Look your audience steadily in the face, and give them all the benefit of your eye. Its power is twofold. Often a slight, almost involuntary movement will tell you that such a person has understood that point, or perhaps the rather

puzzled look will suggest that you should make it clearer before leaving it. If any are asleep you are warned to make your preaching more rousing, though it is not always the preacher's fault if country folk fall asleep on Sunday afternoon. But generally there is much of encouragement and inspiration to be gathered from the people. Another power of the eye is felt in the conviction it carries to the heart of the hearer. When Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man," we do not suppose he was looking on the floor or reading from a manuscript. You have to deliver the word home, and this needs the eye as well as the voice. Herein lies one chief advantage of preaching without notes; there is nothing between the preacher and the people. He is eye to eye with them; he looks them in the face as a fellowman charged with a message from God, and heart to heart he prays them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God.

A few brief but important hints will fitly close this section. To take the measure of the voice required to fill the building announce the opening hymn in rather a low tone, keeping your eye fixed on one at the far end; if he turns to the place without hesitation, you may conclude that all can hear. It is best to commence in rather a low voice, but not too low, for you will rise to

a natural tone as you warm with your work; but if you begin too high, you will find it almost impossible to get down again. Be sure you make all hear, but beware of too much voice; quality tells far better than quantity. Use your voice according to the size of the building, so that all may hear without discomfort. Be master of your voice, and modulate its tones as your subject requires. Open your mouth and let the words come out; but let them be real words, and not inarticulate mumblings. If you cannot think of a word, don't "hum" and "ha," but calmly pause a moment, and then, if you cannot find the right word, use the best you can. Take a full breath before commencing, and keep your lungs well filled as you go on, taking good advantage of natural pauses. The voice becomes unnatural and painful to listen to when forced from an exhausted chest. Take time to breathe; beware of a too hasty and noisy inspiration. Exercise care in the formation of good habits at the first, and you will be amply repaid afterwards.

THE HYMNS AND SCRIPTURE LESSONS.

Though the sermon is popularly regarded as the chief item in the service, you should arrange and conduct every part with care and reverence. The service should be well balanced, in the pro-

portion and tendency of its various parts, so as with some diversity to be in itself a unity. While selecting hymns and lessons to forward the purpose of the sermon, you should remember that some may need help of another kind, and arrange to let fall some "handfuls of purpose" for them to glean. A well-chosen opening hymn announced and read impressively gives a tone to all that follows. Never can we forget the impression produced by the simple, touching way in which, at an evangelistic service, the lady evangelist read the verse—

"I have a Saviour, He's pleading in glory,
A dear loving Saviour, though earth-friends be few;
And now He is watching in tenderness o'er me,
And, oh! that my Saviour were your Saviour too."

One felt irresistibly that she was simply telling the truth; that she had this Saviour, and longed that He might become to others what He was to her.

Too little attention is often paid to the public reading of the Scriptures. It is sometimes painfully evident that the preacher regards this merely as a "preliminary" on the way to the sermon; a short psalm, or a brief portion carelessly read, suffices. Those who show so little respect for God's Word can hardly expect the congregation to pay much attention to their own words.

The first requisite to good public reading is to understand what you read. The correct utterance of the words is only a part of reading. To read intelligently, you must put the meaning into the words—*i.e.* you must read the meaning into the minds of your hearers. Hence you should carefully study the selected portion beforehand.

The next requisite is sympathy with the truth, so that it may come warm from your heart. You can only hope to impart what you feel yourself. Generally the "lesson" is chosen with some reference to the sermon, and hence a special interest attaches to it. However familiar the portion, think it over afresh with a view to the occasion.

If the Scriptures are read intelligently and sympathetically, *there is seldom need for a running comment*—the meaning is placed on the surface. But if you think a passing word of comment or application necessary, let it be as brief and as seldom as possible. You have your opportunity in the sermon; let the unadulterated Word have fair scope in the lesson. Some of your hearers seldom read for themselves, their Bible consists of the portions they hear in the sanctuary; therefore take care to render full justice in public to the written Word.

PUBLIC PRAYER.

No portion of the service is more important, and none more liable to abuse, than the prayer, especially if extemporaneous. If this be what it should be, it not only brings a blessing on the whole service, it lifts preacher and people into closer fellowship with God. "But slovenly, careless, lifeless talk in the guise of prayer, made to fill up a certain space in the service, is a weariness to man, and an abomination to God."¹

The great essential to appropriate public prayer is *reality*. "Prayer is a transaction with God—as really, though not as palpably, as Abraham's intercession for the men of Sodom was a transaction with God, or Jacob's night of wrestling at Peniel. Let the minister feel himself face to face with God, speaking no word, expressing no feeling, harbouring no imagination from which he would recoil if he stood before the throne and saw the Mighty One in visible form bending His ear."²

Three considerations will greatly assist you in this most important exercise:—

1. **CONSIDER YOURSELF.** As the Jewish priest was required to purify himself before he made intercession for the people, so should you seek in private the heart-preparation for public prayer.

¹ Spurgeon.

² Blaikie.

As you are about to make intercession for sinners, and to present the prayers and praises of the great congregation, you should see that the relation between yourself and God is such that you can reasonably hope your ministry will be accepted on behalf of the people. Here, above all, you need the witness of your own conscience to your sincerity, the witness of the Spirit to your acceptance, and that inward cleansing which enables you with humble boldness to venture very near the throne of God. How awful, yet how hallowed and honoured is the position which the preacher occupies when he thus addresses God as the mouthpiece of the congregation. If duly prepared for this sacred employment, you will often enjoy, while engaged in it, your richest times of holy rapture and conscious strength.

2. CONSIDER THE CONGREGATION. During the singing of the opening hymn survey the congregation, and form an estimate of their wants, so that in your prayer you may present their sins in confession, their wants in supplication, their praises in thanksgiving, and their adorations in grateful ascriptions, before the throne. *Condense their wants into words*, so that each devout soul may be drawn into the prayer. Often the half-suppressed or boldly uttered "Amen" will tell when praying hearts feel their longings expressed,

and you will find your spirit quickened by the sympathetic flame. As heart responds to heart the power increases and the fervency deepens, the promises are pleaded, faith grasps the blessing, and

“Heaven comes down our souls to greet,
And glory crowns the mercy-seat.”

Nor must you allow your supplications to be limited to the congregation. Especially on the Sabbath, *intercession should be made for all sorts and conditions of men*; for the young and the aged, the poor and the sick, the bereaved and the perplexed, for Queen and country, for the universal Church, and for Jewish and Gentile unbelievers of all nations. This sympathy with the people, the country, the Church, and the world will furnish you with so many topics for prayer, that you will be under no temptation to fill up the time with mere platitudes and phrases.

This consideration of the people will make you *brief in public prayer*. If you exceed a reasonable limit it is likely most of the congregation will leave you to finish by yourself, and wait with a not very patient feeling till you have done. Said George Whitefield, of a certain long-winded brother: “He prayed me into a good frame of mind, and if he had stopped there it would have

been well ; but he prayed me out of it again by keeping on." In private you may continue in prayer as long as you find it profitable, but in public you should not pray longer than you can keep the congregation with you.

3. CONSIDER THAT GOD IS PERSONALLY PRESENT, *knowing all hearts and especially your own.* Consequently He not only hears every word you utter, but knows why you utter it ; whether you seriously mean it, or only use the expression to round off a sentence, or fill up the time ; whether you are praying to the people for them to hear and admire, or to God for Him to hear and answer ; whether it is the language of faith and desire, or that of form and custom. Any deceit or conceit is entirely out of place in the Divine Presence, and no lightness or irreverence can endure the test of this awful scrutiny. Yet this is the best aid to real prayer. God is indeed present : in His omniscience to understand our needs, in His omnipotence to supply them, in His infinite love to fill us with all needful blessing. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Many of the common faults of extemporaneous prayer will be avoided if due weight be given to these three considerations. Still it may not be

amiss to add a few cautions against those abuses which are the most prevalent.

There is a proper language of prayer which should be wisely cultivated. The Psalms and other devotional parts of Scripture are exceedingly rich in this respect, and you should make their wealth your own. But avoid all terms of merely human endearment, such as "Dear Lord," "Sweet Jesus," and the like, for they indicate a familiarity unbecoming in an approach to the Holy One. Neither should you fill in the breaks between the petitions by a constant repetition of some form of the divine Name. You would not thus repeat a human name in conversation, and you should use at least as much common sense in approaching God as in talking to man. The same condemnation awaits the frequent interlarding of petitions with "Oh," "Oh," which is quite unnecessary, and is offensive to good taste. Senseless, hackneyed phrases about "oil running from vessel to vessel," and "the unthinking horse rushing into the battle," should be for ever discarded. Avoid the current misquotations of and additions to certain much used and much abused passages of Scripture.

As you pray with the people, you should be careful to pray so that they can put their hearts into your words: intelligently, that they may

understand; sympathetically, that they may be drawn to join; earnestly, that your devotion may quicken theirs; and with holy confidence, that they may be emboldened to grasp the blessing. But do not shout, or you will distress them by excessive noise or shrillness; neither should you sink your voice to a whisper, or few will be able to follow. Do not disappoint the devout by a pious talk in the place of prayer, nor disgust them by a side lecture on their failings, nor attempt to instruct them by introducing into the prayer what should come in the sermon, nor recapitulate the sermon in the concluding prayer. Only let prayer be *real*: in the confession of real sins, ascription of real praise, asking a supply for real wants, while the presence of God is felt to be a great reality; and most of the common faults of this part of the service will melt away as snow before the sun.

MODES OF PREACHING.

Many lines converge in the pulpit. The preacher there sustains at once various relations to the WORD, the SPIRIT, HIMSELF, and the CONGREGATION.

The Word is in him, in his mouth and in his heart. The Spirit has been with him in secret, guiding his preparations, and is now present to enable him to deliver the message and to witness

to it in the consciences of the people. That he may show himself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, he must be content to forget himself, and to allow the truth to possess him fully, so that he may win for it the same place in others as it occupies in himself. And he is more than the teacher of the congregation : he is God's ambassador to them, speaking words to which the Spirit sets the seal. Yet he is their brother, and touched with a feeling of their infirmities. Liberated himself, he now proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

Now by what mode of delivery can the preacher best respond to all these relationships ?

Some read their discourses. We do not say that this is limiting the Spirit ; for it is as easy now for Him to lead the preacher to write His meaning as when He inspired the sacred penmen ; and the preacher is as likely to correctly interpret the mind of the Spirit in the quiet of the study as in the excitement of the sanctuary. But unless the reading be so well done that one scarcely notices that it is done at all, the result is largely discounted by this mode of delivery. A certain correctness and minute beauty of finish may be thus attained ; but at how great a cost may be estimated from the oft-expressed feeling that if the sermon

had only been preached it would have been so much more effective. If an advocate read his speech in court, who would engage him to defend a case? Occasionally a great preacher like Chalmers may be found who, in consequence of peculiar nervousness, can only excel by reading; but generally he who can write a good sermon should earnestly covet and cultivate the power to preach it.

Oosterzee commends memoriter preaching as the best and the only perfect style of delivery; but his ideal is so high that very few, even among ministers, are likely to attain to it. He would have the preacher not only memorize the sermon word for word, but also commit the thoughts and feelings so entirely to heart, that the sermon becomes a living reality within him, which he can give forth as a fully prepared effort, not of the memory, but of the entire being; so that each thought will come with its appropriate emotion, because it will awaken it at the time, just as if then conceived anew, and all will seem as full of freshness as if produced *impromptu*. This is a fine ideal, but who can rise to it? We think few will attempt it, and fewer still will succeed; nor can we advise the attempt.

Generally memoriter preaching falls far below this ideal. Too often it is only a recitation; a pain-

ful exercise of the memory; the nobler faculties being unemployed, while the overwrought memory labours hard to keep on the track. Sometimes it succeeds, sometimes it fails, and then the initiated witness the flounderings of the preacher as he tries to recover the track. This would-be memoriter work is often done at the cost of all that is most important: gestures are either wanting or unnatural, emotions are simulated, the imagination is paralysed for the time, and reason kept in abeyance; for the thinking has been done beforehand, everything is in the memory, and the whole anxiety is centred in the effort to pour out the wine without spilling a single drop. Imperfect memoriter preaching is the most objectionable of all styles.

The extemporaneous delivery of carefully prepared thought, though sometimes inferior to reading in propriety and exactness of composition, and though partly dependent on the moods of the preacher and the conditions of the service, yet possesses so many advantages that we do not hesitate to recommend it as the very best mode for the ordinary preacher. The *SINE QUA NON* is a most faithful and thorough preparation. Then the memory is not burdened, for the logical outline hangs together so that thought suggests thought without effort; the reasoning faculties have their

material at hand, and know how to go to work on it; the heart has got hold of the truth, and the truth has hold of the heart; all has been saturated with prayer, and the word is living in the soul of the preacher; the Spirit rests on all, to open the heart and to touch the tongue. Heaven is waiting to speak, and earth is waiting to listen. Under such influences, preachers rise to an eloquence they could never attain on paper, and the heart to heart wrestling is infinitely more natural and powerful than when that non-conductor, the manuscript, is inserted between. With the audience before him, the preacher can modify his language and conduct his argument to suit their capacity or their need. With his eye upon them, he sees whether they catch his meaning, and he can proceed with the next point or recapitulate as he finds occasion. As he gathers inspiration he can seize and use new illustrations and arguments that flash upon him, and thus the sermon is the product, not of his own mind merely, but in many respects it is made what it is by the influence of the congregation.

Of course those who adopt this mode will sometimes have a "poor time," but this will be amply compensated by other seasons of glorious liberty. If they use no notes they will sometimes forget a thought or two, but this is better than

being in bondage to the paper, and they will generally gain more thoughts than they miss.

To make this style effective the preacher must be in full sympathy with the truth and at peace with the King, whose ambassador he is. Any secret sin will weaken him, will dim his spiritual vision, and check his denunciation of iniquity. He must also possess a lively sympathy with mankind, and especially with the individuals who compose his congregation, that he may give each his portion in due season.

Various Occasions.

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord."—PS. xxxiv. 11.

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them."—ACTS viii. 5.

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth and taught them."—ST. MATT. v. 1, 2.

"And He went through the cities and villages, teaching."—ST. LUKE xiii. 22.

CHAPTER V.

VARIOUS OCCASIONS.

ALTHOUGH the habits of study and observation which we have inculcated form the foundation of all successful work, yet each department possesses specialities which demand passing notice. More than this we cannot afford within the limits of the present volume.

ADDRESSES TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

The Sunday school affords splendid training for the pulpit. In preparing for his class the teacher acquires the habit of careful, systematic Bible study, and in teaching he suits his methods to his scholars. He has a ready gauge, too, of his success in the attention, or inattention, of his class. When he addresses the school he is under necessity to be short, interesting, and impressive, and he is thus forming the habits essential to an acceptable and useful preacher.

A Sabbath school is a church in miniature. Among the children may be found the vicious and the thoughtful, the prayerless and the anxious, the thoughtless transgressor and the true Christian. Too often this is overlooked, and they are addressed *en masse* as if they were all alike; and so the timid, trembling ones, who are "trying to be good," get disheartened, for want of kind recognition and encouragement.

An address to such an audience should be as carefully prepared as a sermon, with special heed to "Old Humphrey's" motto: *Allure, instruct, impress*. Usually from ten to fifteen minutes is long enough. Happily there is now no need for extreme simplicity, for the children are so well taught in the day school; but the address should be adapted to their capacity. Young people have a strong objection to childishness in a speaker. Good fresh anecdotes, if to the point, are always welcome, but you should avoid the repetition of those which have already been used *ad nauseam*; and only make sparing use of stories about preternaturally good little boys and girls who "died and went to heaven." This kind of anecdote gives children the idea that if any one becomes very good he is likely to die pretty soon, thus, with their strong love of life, they are repelled from religion rather than attracted.

Endeavour to impress them with the blessedness of a truly noble life, with Christ as their Friend, Companion, and Strength. They have a terribly hard time of temptation to pass through in childhood and early youth: many fight their hardest battles at these stages. We, who have passed through the conflict, should remember our past, that we may sympathise with and help our young friends now.

More recognition should be accorded to the initial salvation enjoyed by little ones who have not reached the age of full responsibility, and who have not yet wickedly departed from the Lord. In the younger classes, especially among those who belong to Christian homes, there are many such, who with the simple trust of childhood look upon Jesus as their Friend, and cling to Him. In intention and in reality these are Christians. Why then should not this grace be recognised and every endeavour made to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, so that they may be "as plants grown up in their youth"?

Our Lord gave the leader of the apostolic band a special charge to feed His lambs. Take care to put good food for them into your addresses. They need it a little at a time, and often; given with gentleness and warm with sympathy; pleasant to the taste, and so fresh as not to pall

on the appetite. Seek to nourish the new nature implanted in them by the Spirit of God till it becomes the controlling power of their life.

As a Sabbath school is a miniature church, so a good address to the children is a miniature sermon; and the advices we have given are most of them equally applicable to its preparation. It should, however, be briefer, simpler, and more fully illustrated than the sermon; yet it ought not to be an unshapely mass of anecdotes and similies, but should have a good strong framework of thought to which the illustrations are only subservient. Sometimes the interest may be increased by the use of *alliteration*; e.g. "The Voyage of Life" may be made all the more alluring if you exhibit a deep-blue C which may serve as the initial to Captain, Cargo, Crew, Chart, Compass; or the characteristics of a good soldier of Jesus Christ may be described in an *acrostic* on the word Soldier, thus Smart, Obedient, Loyal, Dauntless, Irresistible, Ever-watchful, Ready. But this should not be carried to excess, or it becomes forced and complicated, and may beget in the children a craving for oddities.

MISSION SERVICES.

In some parts, when harvest approaches strangers come to cut and bind the corn. They

do a large proportion of this work, though the hands ordinarily employed on the farm assist as far as other duties allow. It is often so in the Church, and this has been carried to such an extent that some are now recognised as special "missioners," and a great ingathering is expected wherever they go. But as the "home-hands" have a share in harvest work, so those usually employed in preaching have their times of ingathering. Nothing is more satisfactory than for preachers and people to continue in such a state of life and activity that the ordinary services are seasons of frequent conversions, and those in the way of salvation are continuously added to the church. Such churches are in the best state to profit by a special mission.

Every preacher should earnestly covet success in winning souls and look for conversions at all times, but especially when he preaches to a congregation consisting largely of the unconverted. Hence the Sunday evening services are generally supposed to be evangelistic. But there are times when a preacher is called to conduct a mission, or to assist in one, and we have to consider how such an effort may best be made successful.

In evangelistic work, *self-preparation is as necessary as sermon preparation*. Much secret prayer is necessary to keep the preacher in fellowship

with God, and filled with holy unction. Personal magnetism, a tender heart, and a strong faith, though invaluable as adjuncts, may become a source of weakness, inasmuch as through them persons may be influenced and won to the preacher who are not brought to Christ. Paul was anxious that the faith of his converts should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God; and we do well to emulate his example.

The success of a mission depends chiefly upon *the state of the church, and the co-operation of Christian friends*. It is, therefore, generally the wiser course to labour first to lead these to humble themselves before God, and to seek a deeper work of grace in themselves. Charles Finney insists that it is vain to expect a good work to begin or continue unless you can break down believers, and keep them humble, tender, and sympathetic. Many Christians live in so cold a state that they are useless in church work; they would chill a young convert. So before sinners are converted, the church should be prepared to receive and nourish them. You should, therefore, expound and enforce the higher experiences of the Christian life, so that believers may be convinced of their low condition, and led to seek forgiveness, and to lay hold upon all God

waits to bestow. They should be urged publicly to consecrate themselves afresh and fully to God, and to expect immediate blessing in response to their faith, as in the case of penitents seeking salvation.

You will find that, as believers are humbled before God, stiffness and formality will give place to a gracious freedom, and sinners will be more disposed to attend the services. Now although you may very properly address yourself particularly to these, you should not by any means discontinue urging believers to seek the higher blessings of the great salvation. Sinners are often won by this, rather than by the preaching aimed expressly at them; perhaps, because they see in such a salvation a religion worth having.

To deal effectually with the ungodly, you must have deep convictions of the truth; you must be strong and clear in your statements and expositions; a tone of certainty must ring through your utterances,—but all must be suffused with intense love to God and to souls. You should expound and enforce the doctrines of sin, repentance, the atonement, faith, forgiveness, the new birth, etc., so clearly that sinners shall know *why* they must repent, and *how*; *what* they are to believe, *in whom*, and *why*; and what they are to gain by believing. In fine, you must first labour to show

them their need of Christ, and then set Him before them as a present Saviour, able and willing to save to the uttermost. Be thorough in your work. A great deal of work done nowadays, we fear, is little more than show. The exceeding sinfulness of sin, the righteousness of the Great Judge, and the wrath to come, are almost ignored; repentance is scarcely mentioned; consequently there is no deep conviction of sin, the word is received with joy, the convert's name gladly entered, but "these have no root, which for awhile believe, and in time of temptation fall away."

There is often difficulty in getting penitents to declare themselves. Various methods are in use. Perhaps the most popular is to ask them to stand up, while the heads of all, except the preacher, are bowed in silent prayer. This is certainly making the cross as light as possible. The old Methodist plan of urging them to come forward to the "penitent form" is still in great favour in some parts, but in others it has been superseded by inviting them into the "inquiry room." The best of all is when the Spirit so mightily convinces of sin, that penitents declare themselves as they did on the day of Pentecost, or as the jailer did at Philippi. Such cases are not rare in some parts, and they would be more frequent if preachers

had more faith in their message, and if the people had a firmer hold upon God.

Whether it is wise to go among the people at the after meeting to urge them to enter the inquiry room, is a very difficult question, which will be variously answered in different parts of the country, and by different evangelists. That harm is sometimes done in this way is certain; but it is equally certain that some have thus been gathered who might otherwise have gone away undecided. Some evangelists, especially if strangers, can do without offence what others could not do; but generally we think it wise not to approach a person unless you have some reason to believe him to be under conviction, nor to urge too much if you find yourself mistaken. There is a danger of repelling some listeners who, if left in quietness, would yield before the mission closed. But we are fully aware that we are treading now on very tender ground. Many a soul has been won by intense importunity, and one fears to restrain what has been stamped in some instances with the Divine blessing. If you act under the conscious power of the Spirit, yet guarding against mistaking mere feeling for Divine leading, you will not go far astray.

Generally it seems a mistake to remove an anxious soul from the scene of its conviction,

where the atmosphere is charged with the spirit of prayer and of faith, to a quiet room, colder in temperature perhaps, and less suggestive of spiritual power. Besides this, the praying people suffer through the removal of anxious souls and of the leading workers. Still cases so differ that while some can be best helped through the emotional excitement of "a red-hot prayer-meeting," others are more likely to find rest in the quiet of the inquiry room, while a thoughtful friend unfolds to them the way of faith in Christ. There is yet a middle course often adopted with good result, namely, to desire anxious souls to stay to an inquirers' meeting, taking care that judicious friends scattered in the congregation shall personally invite any who appear anxious. At such a meeting there need be no hesitation in dealing personally with all who stay.

Much hasty work is often done in the inquiry room, and there many a soul is "daubed with untempered mortar." Great care is required in selecting workers for this department. Only such as have a good repute, and possess an intelligent apprehension of the way of salvation, should be admitted into this "inner circle." The heart of the penitent should be carefully and tenderly probed to discover whether he is under true con-

viction of sin, and whether he is willing to renounce every sin, and to accept Christ as a present Saviour. Some penitents have such a knowledge of Christian doctrine that they only need be encouraged to trust personally in One they have long regarded as the only Saviour; but to others, as to the Philippian jailer, the word of the Lord has to be unfolded more in detail. Every endeavour should be made to lead the penitent to a present acceptance of Christ and a full surrender to Him. Quiet intervals should be allowed for the transaction of this great business between the sinner and the Saviour.

These meetings should not be unduly prolonged, as if everything depended upon a penitent finding peace before leaving. If the eye be toward the Saviour, there is little to fear. Some become too distracted, under the confusion caused by many advisers and the turmoil of their feelings, to perform the great decisive act of their life there and then; they will do it better in retirement. In many cases the work will be better done if not done too hastily. A deeper conviction of sin, a longer period of penitence, will add much to the strength of faith, and make the new life an intenser reality. If such souls are lovingly watched, each by a judicious friend, and encouraged to "follow on to know the Lord," the result will

probably be more satisfactory than in cases more hastily decided.

The great mistake is often made of counting as "converts" all who enter the inquiry room, hence great disappointment is experienced when after so many conversions there are so few additions to the church. But a distinction should be made in the cases. Many inquirers are already members of some church, but are seeking a clearer sense of acceptance with God; some are from a distance; some are children who will need much loving care and instruction to prepare them for membership; and it might be wise to regard the "new cases" generally as hopeful catechumens, who, under judicious instruction, may soon be added to the church, rather than as being already so fully saved as to need no further assistance. Almost everything, especially in the case of children, depends upon the care that is taken to shepherd the converts, and to nurture them in their new life.

A few practical hints may be added. The details of evangelistic services should be so arranged as to give the Word "free course"; and while the preacher has entire control, and a "free hand," he must be careful not to abuse his liberty, or to attempt to catch or hold the congregation with guile. If he is going to preach on the conversion of St. Paul, he ought not to announce on flaming

posters that he is going to tell "how a wild beast was caught and tamed." A mission should be well and honestly advertised, and earnest workers should give time for house-to-house canvassing, and especially strive to bring out their unsaved acquaintances and relatives to the services. The building in which the services are held should be well lighted and sufficiently warmed, and special attention paid to ventilation. While preacher and people are being slowly smothered, it is no wonder if souls are not saved. Neither is a man shivering with cold likely to be much impressed. The hymns should be carefully chosen, and the choir should be in full sympathy with the missionary, and entirely under his direction. If solos are used, unless the singer is unusually clear in his enunciation, it is best to confine them to the hymn-book, the soloist singing the verse and the congregation joining in the chorus. They can follow the words easily, and will feel them all the more for listening to the one sympathetic voice. No "exhibition singing" should be allowed, but all should be done to the glory of God, and for the success of the mission. The sermons should be short, full of point, full of life, full of Christ: aiming straight at immediate decision and conversion, and preached out of a full heart which longs for success, and expects it there and then.

OPEN-AIR PREACHING.

This original method of publishing the gospel is still the only preaching which reaches vast multitudes who will not attend our churches. "If the mountain will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain."

By this means new ground may be broken up in country villages. A company of friends from a near town, holding a series of outdoor services during the summer, will be pretty sure to excite an interest sufficient to ensure a meeting-place for the winter months.

The attendance at an indoor service, especially on Sunday evenings, may often be increased by holding a short preliminary service outside. This is especially useful in connection with mission services, as it makes an appeal to those who need it most. In summer, a short outdoor meeting after the indoor service may catch some strollers; or under exceptionally favourable circumstances, the usual service might sometimes with advantage be held in the open air.

A village may very pleasantly be missioned by a company of Christians commencing at one end, and, after singing, prayer, and a short address, marching, singing to another spot whence a second address is given, proceeding in the same way to a

third, a fourth, and even a fifth ; so that in little more than an hour the gospel is preached all through the village, fresh persons hearing at each station, while the company of followers goes on increasing. One leader should conduct throughout. Each address should be complete in itself, and if possible a fresh speaker should officiate at each station.

In large towns open-air preaching must be adopted as a regular means for evangelizing the non-churchgoers. This may be done, either in the streets to the passers-by, or in the courts where the people hear in their houses.

The work has peculiarities of its own ; and while every open-air preacher should attend carefully to such methods of preparation as we have advocated, he will find that the exigencies of street preaching are such as nothing but a shrewd mother-wit can successfully cope with. He should always be well furnished, but his sermon must not be such as we have recommended for the pulpit, unless indeed he can depend upon his hearers remaining to listen to the end. At a street corner few of the casuals will hear half the sermon, hence they will miss its drift if one part depends upon another. On this account an outdoor sermon should contain a number of good points, tersely put, and strikingly illustrated, so that any one who

listens at all will be held to the end at least of that point. All long arguments and niceties of exposition are here out of place. The gospel message should be delivered in terms unmistakable, in a manner calculated to fix attention and win the heart. Scarcely can any notes be used; reading the sermon is quite out of the question; memoriter preaching would fail to meet the passing changes of the audience and shifting exigencies of the occasion. Your mind should be well stored, and you must bring forth out of your treasury things new and old. While the gospel in some of its directest forms must be the staple of your preaching, it is a great mistake to be always keeping to one text or reiterating the appeal, "Come to Jesus." The "man in the street" has heard that before, and he will soon know whether you have come prepared with your subject, or whether you are going to ring over the old changes. Remember that street preaching supplies the only gospel some of your hearers listen to, and you will feel that outdoor work requires even more careful preparation than indoor preaching.

If possible, get a few Christian friends to assist in singing, and to form the nucleus of a congregation. Let them face you, and sing, not as loudly, but as sweetly, as they can. In prayer be very brief; always closing with the Lord's Prayer. If

a portion of Scripture be read, let it be well chosen, and it may be worth while in passing to draw attention to special verses. In preaching also be brief, and while you speak distinctly, avoid shouting. Here we may learn from itinerant vendors of nostrums; they speak in a quiet tone, and the people crowd round them, drawn by curiosity. It is far better to have a close company than to be shouting through the din to people on the other side, who just hear enough to destroy the curiosity which might bring them over. Another advantage you thus gain is the power to modulate the voice and speak with effect. You will soon find out whether you are interesting your audience; and the spell of their attention will be the best stimulus. You are bound to be straight and true, for they are looking straight into your eyes; you must interest them, or they will not stay; you must not advance anything open to reply, or you may rouse opposition; and, whatever happens, you must keep your temper, or your position is lost.

The case is slightly different when a service is held in a court, and where there is no danger of any opposition. If the court is not too large, and your position is well chosen, you may, with a clear voice, without extreme effort make yourself heard through the open door or window of every house. But never forget that quality of voice is more

important than quantity; it is not the loudest voices, but the clearest and most incisive, that carry farthest. Here, while the children who congregate around should ever be remembered and addressed, so that they will love to come, the grown-up people who hear without appearing should be especially dealt with, and the conscience round the corner should feel that God has found it out. After service if the sick in the court are visited, an opportunity may be gained for following up the word.

If the service is prolonged, it is better to have two or three speakers, or to give two or three short addresses, with singing between. A portable harmonium well played is a great help; and if a good soloist sings the verse, and the company unite in the chorus, it is an additional attraction.

This is a work requiring special qualifications. Some admirable preachers are quite at a loss out of doors, while others are much more at home on the kerbstone than in the pulpit. Let each true servant of the Lord understand and faithfully perform the work to which he is called and for which he is qualified. But let no one too hastily conclude that he is not fitted for this most important and arduous service.

VILLAGE PREACHING.

Very commonly the lay preacher exercises his vocation chiefly in villages, where he ministers in small chapels to small congregations. Perhaps few, if any, persons of rank or education attend, and he is tempted to think his preparation thrown away. But that is a double mistake. He profits himself by his study, and no congregations have a keener appreciation of a good sermon than those which meet in village chapels.

Villages are the plantations where life is reared for the large towns and cities. If London imported no new life it would soon decay. Amid the sights and sounds of village and country life most of our merchant princes are brought up. Here the physical stamina is nourished which prepares men and women to take front rank in town and city. The most energetic part of youthful country life is continually emigrating to the great centres of population; and to bless and save these young people is to make no mean contribution towards purifying society and saving the world.

Some of the choicest saints are to be found in village congregations: men to whom the little chapel is what the temple was to the Israelite. They stay in the country, though they could get larger wages in the town, for they fear "the

cause" would go down if they left it. To them the anniversaries are as dear as the Pentecost and the Passover were to the Jews; and nothing pains them more than to hear their "little Zion" slighted, or disparagingly compared with larger places. They soon know how preachers look upon them; and the love they show to those faithful men who never despise them, never disappoint them, but always give them their best, is most touching. This love of humble saints is worth a fortune. Many a village Mary still pours the ointment on the feet of Christ by the kindness she shows to His servants, and many a Lazarus still makes his house a home for the preacher, for the Master's sake and for his own. It is not high talent which the villagers crave, though they appreciate it; they ask for love, and they are prepared to give love in return. *Many a village church is dying purely for want of love.* No man really cares for them, they are few and feeble, and every one reminds them of it; they are frequently neglected, and any preacher is thought good enough for them. Is it any wonder if they do not prosper? *Let a preacher make each place the same to himself as it is to the people; let him despise none, but always give his best to the weakest, and he will find himself always welcomed, and his ministry lovingly and gratefully attended.*

Some of the shrewdest and quaintest hearers are to be found in our village chapels, men who have time to think, and make a good use of it. Meditation is not out of date in the country as it is in town. A sermon is little thought of in town an hour after it has been delivered, but in the country a good sermon is talked about and meditated upon and used up in the life.

Often the village hearers are slighted because they are few, and some preachers think it a small offence to neglect a village appointment. It is well our Master was of a different mind when His congregation consisted of one villager at Jacob's well. By dealing lovingly and faithfully with the one, He soon had a larger congregation; and it is so with preachers still.

A small chapel well filled is pleasanter to preach in than a large one half empty. The freedom and simplicity of the service, the fervent responses of the people, the heartiness of the singing, sometimes assisted by ancient instruments, all tend to bless and help the preacher. If the church be low it need not continue so. Only let the preachers unite in their care and love; let them preach well, and kindly visit among the folks with cheery words and warm heart; and the village "Zion" will soon "revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: and the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

SOIREES AND PUBLIC MEETINGS.

These occasions are so various that we can only briefly suggest a few general directions.

Among the more common faults of speakers we place first the shameful recklessness which leads a man to confess that he has nothing to say; and then instead of at once resuming his seat, he promises that if anything should come into his mind as he stands there he will give his audience the benefit of it, and a poor and tedious benefit it is, clearly proving at great length the truth of his confession. Next comes the fault of the local speaker or chairman who occupies time which belongs to the "deputation," just as sometimes those who come first on the list ignore the law of brotherly kindness, and take an unfair advantage of later and more important speakers. To these faults may be added extreme and foolish indulgence in pleasantries, an exaggerated use of empty compliments, speaking without any reference to the occasion, or preaching a short sermon in place of a suitable address.

All preachers are not alike gifted for the platform, but most might, with a little care, acquit themselves creditably. Generally a too carefully prepared speech would seem out of place, but no preparation at all is infinitely worse. The pre-

pared speech may be anticipated by previous speakers, or the drift of the meeting may render it unsuitable, or other more interesting lines of thought may be suggested. Hence we believe it is best for a speaker to go with certain leading thoughts prepared, which will afford sufficient matter if he speaks early or nothing better be suggested. Then as the meeting proceeds he can jot down any fresh thoughts which strike him, and ultimately use those which he judges most to the point.

Make yourself well acquainted with the business of the meeting, and keep to the subject in hand ; but if the occasion be quite general, pursue a purpose of your own. It is very unsatisfactory when no one can tell what a speaker is aiming at. Rightly estimate your relative position, and do not occupy time which belongs to another. Say as little as possible about yourself. Remember time is precious ; therefore do not waste it in needless introductory observations, but come early to the point : say what you have to say, and sit down when you have done.

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